TABOO

by

WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

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Taboo

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Isles of the Blest
The Shame Dance
Land's End
Storm

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Taboo

by

Wilbur Daniel Steele

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To LAURA NELSON THURSTON

WITHOUT WHOSE ABLE ASSISTANCE
(IN THE YEAR 1890)
THIS BOOK WOULD NEVER
HAVE BEEN WRITTEN

Taboo

I

Now the two were in sunlight, where, towards the edge of the little wildwood, it slanted through the branches and gave in glimpses of reality, the miles on miles of island moorland, belts of sand dunes thatched with thin gray-green grasses and blue-green scallops of sea. And now, turning back of a common accord from that out-of-doors of the world, they lost their way for still another last time in the dusk of the Hidden Forest, pursuing alleys leading nowhere, or, climbing interior hills supporting each its one gnarled octopus-sprawl of a centenarian beech-tree, sitting to breathe for a while on the boughs as low as benches, listening to the rustle of birds in the leafy ceiling, and watching the shadows for fabulous things.

"Who would have dreamed, on this perfectly bald-headed island," the girl mused, "that this sort of a place could be?"

John Pizarro shook his head, caught in the same mood with her, half whimsical, half faërie. "That's just it, Glenn; it *isn't. N'existe pas.*"

"It's as if all the world were bread and cheese—no, but you know, darling—as if you and I weren't you and I—but strange, enchanted princes and princesses—and—well, just this; if we were to come again to-morrow we shouldn't find a trace of it here."

"Would you be glad to come again to-morrow, Glenna?"

"Don't moon! Haven't I just finished telling you it wouldn't do any good? It wouldn't be here to come to? . . . I adore it. I do."

"But I mean—"

But what did he mean? He hugged his knees tighter between his wrists, and fine horizontal creases lined his brow. He gave himself a little shake. For once it didn't matter: he was in fairyland.

"I mean," he said, "you've so many others you might be playing with this priceless afternoon. You're so the rage."

"What a line!"

"No, but it's true. You've been here three—four

days now—and you know you're the rage. You make no effort to be; perhaps that's why. But whenever you go, whatever you do—"

"Poor friend! And the answer to *that* rubbish is that here you see me tagging along with you. And I suppose the reason for *that* is that it's piles more fun to discover forests that aren't, than it is to play tennis that perfectly is with Park (that's one of their names) or sail with Pug (that's another) . . . *Do* come along now; *don't* be sedentary!"

Afoot again they roamed again, hand in hand like sylvan lovers, not knowing where, their figures, the one a little taller than the other but drawn with a precision and a grace almost as fine, growing little by little more separate from the woodland dusk as, nearing the edge, the trees let in the sunset through larger and larger interstices among the leaves.

Pizarro looked back. For all he could do he hung back, begrudging every step now that carried them out of the twilight of that enchantment and into the daylight of fact. A phrase of Glenna's returned to lodge in his mind. The words half whimsical, the voice nine-tenths a dream, it seemed cut of the very cloth of this hour stolen from reality:

"It's as if you and I weren't you and I. . . ."

Lagging, he had lost hold of her fingers and she was gone; already the daylight of fact had recaptured the truant and given her an outline, cool rose of sunset, hard and literal.

And now it was catching him. "If we were to come again to-morrow we shouldn't find a trace of it here . . ." Nor the day after to-morrow, nor any day ever to come . . .

"Glenna!"

Not till he saw her look back at him, suddenly arrested, one hand gone to her throat and the shadow of a pucker of abstruse uneasiness between her brows, did he realize how he had said it and how it must have sounded. He was quick to grin; he made it all burlesque immediately. But his face was redder than the sun on the skyline. Stuffing his hands in his pockets he passed her and walked on, out of the forest of the fourth dimension, and back into the cage of space.

In the swamp-grass just here at the edge there was a whisper, and an undulation underfoot. Pizarro shied, true to the frights of his ancestral apes.

"Look out, Glenn! *There!*"

But Glenna hadn't shied. Where she was, was down on her knees. Making instinctive capital of excitement, trilling laughter, rummaging the grass, she caught the snake by the tail-tip and held it up in triumph, squirming knots in the air to get at the imprisoning fingers.

Pizarro stood and gaped. "You—you—darned *fool!*"

"Pretty! Pretty!"

He took out his handkerchief and wiped his neck. He was startled and (he couldn't help it, but he was) repelled. Nipping the dusty little serpent behind the head with a flirt of her free hand she let the body go to coil around her wrist, and flaunting it, high in her mood, she plagued him: "You know yourself, my darling, there's nothing so lovely—there's no other figure like it in the world. Imagine having *no hips at all!*"

He turned and walked a few steps away, so that she shouldn't see the thing in his eyes he couldn't control. The trouble with his eyes was that, getting past the guards of the unconscious, they saw in sym-

bols. . . . The forest of enchantment, where they were not they. And at its going out, the serpent in the grass. . . .

He was moving, but where was he moving to? He wheeled back at her.

"Drop it! Drop it, I tell you! Don't you know that thing's venomous? Look at its head!"

"Venomous your grandmother! How medieval of you, my dear!"

He felt his face purpling. "How can you bear the *feel* of it?"

"Why? . . . Why not? Bear it? A cool and beautiful, graceful creature, and certainly a harmless one—"

"Drop it!"

She turned quick eyes. Suddenly obedient she threw the reptile away in the grass.

"I can't help it," he muttered, conscious of the spectacle he had made of himself in her sight, "I don't like 'em, that's all." He started off across the moor, his face set in lines of pain. Why had he never known of this queerness of Glenna's, this blind spot in her instinct about snakes? He hated snakes; she didn't hate snakes. Where now was their one-

ness? Where was his title in her, that but a moment ago had seemed to him complete?

She had overtaken him and fallen in step, silent now, as she would often be for hours on end. He would have liked to match her in that, but he couldn't. He couldn't hold his peace, for he hadn't any peace to hold. The thing nagged him.

"You were so certain-sure it wasn't venomous, Glenn; how did you know? Since when have you been so chummy with snakes?"

"Ever so long. I don't know that I've ever been anything else."

"That's news to me."

"When I was in school—and when King came to see me, holidays—we were forever out on snake-chases. He is marvelous with them, King is. He can put them to sleep."

"Really? Hmmmm . . . King's coming to-morrow, by the way. Did you know?"

"Thrills! Aren't we glad!"

"We're glad."

They were nearing the car, a hired roadster, left in a track between two smooth swells of the moor. Here, as they came down, the woods were hidden, so

were the roofs of the scattering island farms, the dune-belts, the glimpses of the sea, all the obtrusive furniture of fact. There was left nothing but a simplicity of earth and sky, any earth and any sky. A wind was rising, but it was the evening wind, too soft as yet to ruffle the silence. There might have been another witch-ring, another last breathing-space in the fourth dimension, where he might have walked for a wink in peace. But there wasn't, and Pizarro knew it. He had lost the trick of it; he knew that too in bitterness; and he knew he would never get it back. He realized what he was doing but he couldn't seem to help it. It was one of those moments when he was less than his own size.

"What beats me," he mused aloud, "is how you can be so valiant with deadly reptiles, when one innocuous little tabby-cat—"

She had stopped. Wheeling, hating himself, reviling himself, he threw an arm around her.

"I'm sorry, Glenn! Oh, damn me! Damn me to a dog's hell!"

She stood lax, her eyes set straight ahead and clouded.

"I'm unspeakable, Glenn! I'm abominable!"

Yes, he was abominable. He knew how sickly sensitive she was there, how avertedly ashamed she had always been of that inrooted fear in her of cats. He knew, and in his muddled, embittered perversity he had played upon the knowledge, and he was a hound.

"I *am* a hound! I'm too rotten to live!" He patted her shoulder with awkward imploration and kissed her hair. "Can't you see—don't you know—when you're everything in the world—"

She nipped her lip, shook herself, and twisting quickly laid her finger-tips on his cheek. "Poor darling, I know. Don't worry so." She smiled and unloosed his arm. "Look how late! Let's run!"

Pizarro drove at speed. Following the wheel-tracks rutted in the moor he kept the car careening; once out on the highroad he hunched down behind the wheel and let it go, projectile-wise, his eyes narrowed and his lips drawn back a little from his teeth. It was dangerous, yes; dangerous for them both on that twisty island road; but in the dazzling violence, the rush of iron turned wind and of wind turned iron, the streaming impact of space twisted and time disorganized, the man's nerves found something

nearer peace. The rhythm was perilous, but there *was* rhythm; for a few moments at least there *was* a chord, to resolve all the discordant voices hidden in the cellar beneath his thoughts.

Glenna sat as tight and wordless as he. Her eyes too were narrowed on the whipping road ahead and her lips parted. The fierce backdraught of the wind blew her hair like smoke and color burned in her cheeks. She loved it. It is a curious commentary on the curious shape of her life; with no one in the world but John Pizarro would she have been fool enough to drive through space like that.

Giving up the car at the garage in town they crossed the street to the yacht club, passed through it and out along the pier to the landing-float. Pizarro's yawl, the black *Chimera,* lying broad off beyond the white forms of the club classes, toppentots and racing cats, looked hulking beside them and a little graceless with its high Norway sides, its stumpy bowsprit and sawed-off masts, stayed for weather rather than for speed. Even the dinghy that came away from the side under Blackstone's oars, obedient to the owner's hail, looked rusty and useful beside the tethered skiffs.

They stood and waited, half in a drowse after the rush of air, till Glenna spoke.

"How long are we for hereabouts?"

"That's up to you, Glenn. As long as you're having a good time, and not a minute longer."

"I sometimes wonder if that's the way we ought to —to—"

She let it trail off there, her eyes fixed seaward and dark with the speculations of youth.

"One of these days," she recommenced, and let it go again.

Watchful as ever of her moods, Pizarro played his own to counter it. He cast about for a red herring.

"One of these days, you know," he took her words, "you'll come back to change your frock or powder your nose, and you'll find me gone. Up-anchor and skedaddled for good and all! Right into the blue." He wanted to make an amusing and innocent mystery of it for her beguilement, but because he was more than a little muddled about it in his own mind his tone missed whimsicality and fell into pathos. "I—I'm telling you so you won't be surprised. Eh?"

"Gone? And leave poor me behind?"

"Poor you!" he jeered.

"All alone?"

He chuckled, in cold blood. "Alone! I should like to see you managing to be alone for very long—and besides—there's always King."

"But seriously!" Her eyes came to his, and his lightness had not lightened them. "Seriously and truly, what's got into you this last little while? . . . No, look at me, John Pizarro; I want to know. Because this is at least the third time you've tried it out on me, and that's not your way with your jokes. Besides, a joke is supposed to be funny, and this isn't funny, so it isn't a joke. . . . No—no, now, listen," she persisted, as he pulled a longer and more comical face. "It's not just these things you say. It's things the men say; things Blackstone's always hinting at—"

"Shut up! He's coming, right here."

Pizarro no longer pulled a long face. The business had gone miles further than he wished it had. He changed tactics. He laughed.

"Oh, dear me!" He stuck his hands in his pockets. "What a row!" He studied the sky. "Well, Glenn, now—now what if I should happen to feel one day as if nothing in the world would do me but

a long, wild cruise—somewhere? A man wants to be on his own sometimes, doesn't he? Off on a bat. Good Lord, do you think a fellow wants females tagging him around *all the while?*"

"Yes, all right. But why so—so mysteriously?"

"Well—damn it—can't a young fellow have some glamour about his—"

"You talk—and what's worse, you act—as if you might possibly, all of a sudden, one of these days—*have to.*"

"Have to, eh? Hmmm! Well! Just so! . . . After all, Glenn, what do you know about me, really?"

"It's a wise daughter, you mean? . . . Why, dad, you talk almost as if you were trying to make your daughter believe you had a *past!*"

"Past, eh?" Her father caught at the straw of her shift to raillery. He puffed himself up with indignation. "Past? Why shouldn't I have a past? Good God, what do you take me for, a happy man?"

"You're *not* happy, then." She took hold of one of his hands. "I've been wondering."

"Here's the boat. . . . Good evening, Blackstone. Thanks. . . ."

II

Had John Pizarro a PAST?

He had, and he had not. He had *not,* in the sense that his history had been characterized by nothing quite so arresting as its spotlessness. And he *had,* in the sense that this very spotlessness, the gesture of an enduring and romantic melancholy coupled with an extraordinary, a possessive, and as it were almost a secret, contentment, marked him as a man peculiarly apart. To the uninitiate there was enough of mystery about him to give his associates in the Street an excuse for shaking their heads and saying, "He always was a queer one, Pizarro was; too good to be true," when, at thirty-eight, at the very beginning of the harvest-time of his brilliant career, he slackened pace between two weeks, dawdled around a bit, and presently and for no reason apparent to them, "quit dead."

"Too good to be true."

The man is in the boy. As a youngster in college Pizarro carried everything before him, the more

spectacularly in that he did it without effort, without indeed appearing to be aware of it at all. Just as the luck of pretty much everything else had fallen to him, so had the luck of inheritance. The Latin who had given him his name and a quarter of his blood, had given him the quarter, by chance, that isn't Latin but Greek: the quarter he had been spared in the Puritan strain was (it seemed) the terror of Hell. Clothed in the sort of unspottable innocence that doesn't keep its wearer of necessity indoors when it rains, prepared for New England's sake to look straight at facts (their outsides, of course), and by the chevalier in him gifted with an ingenuous nobility of carriage, bearing his head erect and wearing his spirit like a sword in a scabbard and ready to have it out of it with a grin and a song, his nature had the look about it of a fortune too easy and too princely not to be run through in short order; too good indeed to be true.

In his junior year it seemed as though it had happened.

What had he, at eighteen, to offer to a girl (in his eyes a woman) like Glenna Peterson? What securities less perishable than his boyish charm, his young

verve, his amusing admixture of innocence and devil-may-care, his record in the low hurdles, his future crew-captaincy, his presidency of his class?

On her side, what had Glenna Peterson to offer him? Her beauty? It was radiant. But she was ten years his senior; she would be a woman of fifty at the parlous moment when he was beginning to realize that he was "still young." Her mind? Her conversation? Her thoughts? It was not an extraordinary mind, and though it was good enough, delightful enough, it was already formed in the pattern it would keep, and that was the pattern of a good half-generation ahead of his. And so her conversation, and all her thoughts. The entrée into her set? A membership in the select guild of her friends and worshipers? That at least might be something. They were most of them men who were beginning to succeed.

The daughter of a collegiate family, she had come along naturally with the boys that were upper classmen when she began to dance. Inevitably, of course, when they were graduated, she had begun progressively to linger a little; her beauty, her wit and her joy of life were things the oncoming classes

wouldn't be apt to let go altogether; she had to play at the college-widow for a while—she wouldn't have met Pizarro otherwise.

If those of her own company, the "old gang," were jealous of these occasional "cradle-robbings" of Glenna's they never showed it by anything but their good-humored gibes. Aylward, Lowe, Schuster, Mike Allenby; these four affected to hold their sides. King alone of her "steadies" took them solemnly. He was bed-rock, Henry King. The oldest in the crowd, the biggest, he was probably the brainiest, and he was undoubtedly the hardest-hit. But even though he couldn't take the beloved's innocuous undergraduate philanderings with any lightness of heart, he was as little prepared as any of the rest of them on Olympus for the cold-gray-morning-after news of her gorgeous, her brainless, her fatal escapade.

It was after the boat-race, and victory. That was it, victory. More people can be more sumptuously drunk on victory than were ever drunk on whiskey all at once. Laughter and tears. Triumphant colors, triumphant lights in constellations, triumphant sounds. And flooding the week-end with the orgiastic sublimation of a camp-meeting, the adoration

of young gods. And the chiefest among them Pizarro, the varsity stroke.

One can see how Pizarro could do it, innocent, sanguine, headlong, and head-over-heels in luck and love. It is harder to see how Glenna Peterson could have been quite so impulsively and gratuitously dazzled blind. You of the New Psychology bring out your fixations, your maximations, and all your subconscious bedevilments and escapes. They may be handy here.

For certainly it happened. In the beginning of the new week John Pizarro and Glenna Peterson were man and wife.

There's a mess for you. There are the ingredients for a tragedy for two; the swifter the better, but whether swift or creeping, very bad.

Take Pizarro. There was talk of his not going on with his senior year, but in the end he did. And there he was, neither flesh nor fowl nor good red herring. In the lecture-room, in the gym, on the field (until he gave that up), to all outer witness he was peas-in-the-pod with his mates. But he wasn't. Whether it was their fault or his, a frontier as definite as that between races separated him from them.

They couldn't help it; he couldn't help it; he was a roc, a hippogriff, a married man. Nor in his "home," in the town apartment they had taken, did he any more truly belong. Whether it was their fault, or whether again it was his, in the uneasy eyes of the "old gang" (rallied around after the first shock to see their ill-dealt-with darling through) he could never be anything but a fish on land, a bachelor's baby, a college kid.

So, one would have said, the too-easy and too-princely fortune of his luck had fulfilled the prophecy of its collapse; it had indeed been too good to continue to be true any longer than the fascinated watcher could hold his breath.

That's what one would have said. The fact was that to Pizarro himself it seemed not spent but doubled. He was happier than he had ever been in his life. Whether he was flesh or fowl might worry others, it didn't worry him. Had he not with him now, incarnate and captive and permanent, the very essence of the very instant of victory? Had he not the woman for his own whom all the world loved and who loved him in the world alone?

So it will be seen that Glenna must have had an-

other quality hidden about her somewhere, quite as extraordinary as her loveliness. It is uncertain whether it was deliberate or altogether unconscious, her will to "carry it off." It is doubtful if any of them ever really saw through her valiant and generous pantomime except King, and King could see through stone walls. The rest must have shaken their heads in wonder and with not a little sense of chagrin and disillusion in their secret hearts to behold their one-time equal making out so famously on the gruel fare of a school-kid's philosophy, his half-baked enthusiasms, and his hardly more than adolescent affection. From fearing disaster, they would begin as time went by to speculate, each man to himself and a little dubiously, a little wishfully, why it should insist on taking so long. Against this there could be but one defense, a deliberate deepening and darkening of their faith in their own pessimism. "They're still in the first flush of it, poor moonstruck pair. Give them a solid year of it, though; then see."

As none of them was able to get anything of what was Pizarro beneath the surface of his gilded youth, so none of them had yet grasped the fact that his

luck was beyond any grasping or computation, a sum like a billion dollars, as incapable of being counted as it is of being spent.

They said a year. He was given a year and a little more for good measure; and the last day was as eager as the first day and the last month as strong in the adventure of happiness as the honeymoon had been. Then, the time having come, his luck lifted the hand and said the word that fooled them all, and like the passing of a prestidigitator's wand swept the tragedy that was to have been inevitable, and all the pay that had been coming to the fiddler, and all the repentance at leisure piling up, into the limbo of things that never were. That was the stature of John Pizarro's luck.

It knocked him to the ground, for the time being, and held him there stunned and grief-stricken and afraid. It was on the night of his class's graduation; the whisper of the very hand-clapping that may have followed his name, the absentee, crept across the distance that separated the Hall from the room in the hospital where the doctor was telling him, or trying to tell him, that his daughter would live, and that his wife was dead.

A rustle in the airless void beyond the windows. The clapping of an invisible multitude of hands. As though it might have been acclaim lifted in a dynastic night. "The Queen is dead! Long live the Queen!"

It is probable that he heard it with some abeyant faculty and marked it; certainly it marked him from that day. The pæan of his luck in the instant of its unique and pitiless triumph.

But he didn't know he heard it; he didn't know it was there. He was too dazed, too lost in the fearful blackness of the emptiness of the world.

His coming out from that was by the door of anger and rebellious hate. It was the baby! That baby!

For days he wouldn't look at the baby. They hadn't wanted her so soon, anyway; "hadn't understood how it could have happened;" Glenna especially had been "taken by surprise." . . . It was that baby's fault. She was the assassin of his life's life! And she was a red and ugly monstrous little thing.

That she was a rosy and a lovely perfect little thing came to him only by degrees, marked by more days, when the anesthesia of anger, having served its purpose and brought him through, began to unwrap

its kindly windings and let him open his eyes again. And seeing she was Glenna he named her Glenna.

Of course now he could be nothing but a conqueror. If there had been any chaff in his particular handful of the future, this final and dreadful winnowing had done for that. In another metaphor, by one inoculating scratch of a panegyric serum he had been sent out into the world immune against pretty well all the ills he would ever have been apt to have. He had gone through the perils of love and marriage, of loss and grief and rebellion, all as it were in vivid concentrate, and come out on the other side of them a man grown, still truly a boy.

He was the youngest by actual years in his class: in another sense he was really the youngest, his youth miraculously untouched. He had done something permitted to no son of Adam; he had eaten his cake and he had it too. . . .

III

It was more than that Pizarro's youth was untouched. Every quality of the kind of youth he had had was sealed and justified forever by its fruit. His defenseless honesty, his headlong innocence, his faith in the world, his ardent willingness to take a chance. And as if all this armor were not enough to warrant his invulnerability, he had been dipped in the waters of a fulfilment beyond the common dream, and that memory was shining mail. And he had a child.

It is not to be wondered at then that he went ahead, although there were plenty in his new surroundings in commerce who did wonder (not knowing about him) how a youngster so obviously cut for a "sucker" ever managed to last the first day out among the wolves. What they did not understand was that, whereas by the rule of nature the simple at heart are devoured by the wolves, yet from time to time in history there has been a man so simple at heart that he walked through the darkest forest un-

molested; yes, and the wolves themselves led along at his heels in not a little bewilderment, their troubled tails between their legs.

There was another thing about Pizarro which, by adding a touch of mystery to his figure, increased the effectiveness of his candid attack and his daredevil faith. This was his habit of withdrawal. Possessed of youthfulness, good looks, and most of the companionable graces, he ought to have been commencing to cut as much of a figure uptown in the evening as he did downtown by day. Nor was it that he was never seen about, for he was, quite often, here and there. It was simply that, for some reason or other, he never seemed to make the most of his opportunities as a bachelor and a man about town. And just there is a significant commentary upon the shape of his life then forming; not one in ten of the people he dealt with daily in the city were aware that he was not a bachelor, and that he had a home.

Even at twenty, with the rough-and-tumble of existence before him and wanting all of any fellow's energies and wits, it had never entered his mind to do anything but build a home around this Glenna the Second, the visible immortality of his wife.

And of course he had nothing to build it of but himself. There were nurses, naturally, housekeepers, governesses, but they were many and transitory, as such people are bound to be on the Connecticut shore with the city thirty-odd miles away. His was the rôle of permanence. The Government changes, the Crown persists.

In the fact that he did it, that in his eventful life of day-by-day, and still the cub he was, he took the time to live out there where it was best for Glenna, lay a little part of the answer perhaps to the riddle of his deceptive strength. The flagging giant and the touch of earth. And in the fact that he not only did it but loved to do it lay another and a greater part.

No man can live very much of a life without some kind of "love and the world well lost." A share of the world was lost to Pizarro. Dining-out was pretty well lost to him, for from the beginning he made a point of being in evidence at the hour of bath and supper and tucking-in, arrogating to himself very often the nursely duties, achieving an emotion mingled of melancholy and a possessive and sensuous delight in making himself menial to her

tiny needs, solemnizing in the steaming incense the bathing of the diminutive flesh that was the body of his boyhood's wife, broken for him. Afterwards, wrapping her in a big towel, he liked to sit before the chimney-fire for a while with her and talk. And since in the beginning no sort of words meant anything to her he fell into a habit of running on as he would have run on with the other Glenna, using measured phrases (fit for a college senior), the profound, edgeless, abstruse philosophizings of the age of voting, and grave discussion of the day in town.

Having got into this habit he never got out of it. Even when language came to mean something to the girl; even when, permitted to stay up and sit at table across from his shirt-front at the evening meal, she could carry along an end of the conversation in funny, useful words of her own, even then he never talked "baby-talk" unless (as though the presence made him remember to, for a moment) some third person chanced to be there.

Perhaps the roots of this last phenomenon lay deeper than just the remembering-to. Who can say what shapeless subterranean elements there were in it of self-consciousness and of jealousy? Pizarro

can be heard to snort. Anything within so much as a million miles of that—with King! They would both have guffawed. . . . For if there was a third at table or before the fire it would be King.

The rest of the "old gang" was dissipated; Glenna Peterson had been the vinculum in that crowd; once she was taken out they dropped away. In his later years Pizarro was to have one of them (Lowe) for a short time in his employ, but that was nothing; the end had already been written to the story of that close corporation of men who had looked down with uneasy indulgence at the bull-calf in the china-shop of their out-of-hours world.

All save Henry King. If Pizarro had made himself the second Glenna's father and mother in one, King had constituted himself the sum of a grandmother, a rich uncle and a maiden aunt.

Sometimes as they sat of an evening at the end of the tall room where the fire was, flat in their chairs, their feet spread out, and nothing much to say (they were capable of staring into the coals for hours without a syllable, after the kid had gone to bed), Pizarro would slant a secret eye to study the other fellow's face at rest, speculating as to the thoughts

behind it and wondering at the turn of things that had brought the two of them together there out of the immensity and complexity of that world which seemed "well lost" to King too.

Of all his wife's chums, in that year of his curious contact with them, King was the one Pizarro had known least well. King wasn't of the sort to be in the middle of things. He was never "the life of the party." The eldest and the quietest, in his character of the watcher, neither betraying his inward catastrophe by too long a face nor hiding it with too wide a grin, he would not be apt to take much of the attention of a youngster riding break-neck through an emotional cannonade. And so it was not till now that Pizarro, his eyes cleared first by grief and later by the sense of a comradeship growing of itself out of a past and a present shared in a degree but gradually realized, began to look at King and see the man.

Little by little then, without wanting words or anything more than the witness of King's attitude toward the child and himself, he perceived that Glenna Peterson had been more than an episode in the life of the architect's heart; that he had been

truly and deeply in love with her, and that something had been broken inside of the man when she gave her life, her death and her child to a galloping upstart of a schoolboy.

Far from subtracting anything from that memory of Pizarro's, nothing could be named that would so have served to fill up the measure of its romantic sorrow and happiness, and to ripen and dignify it in the young imagination by the visible backing of the adult. Once Pizarro had got this through his head, even if at times and quite subconsciously it did prompt him to try to hustle the little Glenna out of the common picture by "talking down to her" and by such oblique means persuade himself for the moment (still subconsciously) that he had put King in his place as company—once he had got this through his head he transferred to the older man outright all the combined filial and fraternal loyalty compounded in an only child, orphan since his eleventh year.

That he had done this he never put in words; perhaps never in a definite thought. Whether or not King realized it he never said. They "took it out on" Glenna, the growing girl. That she continued to

grow in grace instead of queer beyond description and spoiled beyond telling would seem (at first thought) no fault of theirs. But at second thought perhaps it was. Perhaps there was something in the otherwise ruinous concentration upon her happiness of the affectional capacities of two able-bodied grown-up males that neutralized its own poison; perhaps, like a benevolent hypnotism, their will to have her turn out such and such moulded her willy-nilly so.

It has been told how, in the early years, Pizarro went through a process of digging King out of the past by dint of clandestine searchings of his face at rest, by wondering, and by putting two and two together with the simplest of common sense. It was not till later that he began to be aware that the tables were turned and that King was studying him.

Glenna was at thirteen then, the unlucky number of years for wrists and necks and knees, which are apt to be too thick and too thin, and for voices and tempers too. There is an appreciable instant when the fuse has stopped smoking and the bomb not yet gone off. King himself, in the later forties, a little

bald at the temples and grizzled above the ears, had taken on more weight along with his maturing success, a graded and natural and inevitable increase in the girth not only of his belt-band but of his mind and his imagination; he had a way of sitting, that, although he might not intend it so, had an air about it of a sitting-in-judgment.

He sat in judgment one evening, after a half a year of speculations through his eyebrows and ruminations behind his hand. Pizarro had just returned from carrying his daughter off to bed, a preposterous armload all of a sudden (it seemed), endless overlaps of tan stockings, stalky arms, and snaky braids, of shrill, time-honored protests against the hour, and funny objurgations against them both. Running a hand down over his face as if to make it the mask of pure abstraction King announced to Pizarro: "That kid ought to be getting off to school, Johnnie. Boarding-school, I mean. Away."

"What are you talking about?"

There followed ten minutes of argumentation, rough and tumble as between friends, yet singularly inconclusive, run all to words, debilitated on the one side by the fact that Pizarro was too taken-aback by

this confrontation with an inevitable but hitherto avoided idea to do much more than squirm and bluster, and on the other by the circumstance that King, far from being able to tell him, had never been able to tell *himself* at all concretely "what he was talking about."

It was ended for that evening at least by Glenna's stealing back for still another last good-night. Settling to overgrown roost on her father's knees, pink in her nighty and bigger-footed than ever in her floppy slippers, she tried the old dodge of staring into the coals hard enough to make all three of them forget that she was there.

It wouldn't work to-night. There was too much in the air. "Glenn," said Pizarro, "King tells me you've got to go to school."

"Well—y-e-s—why not? I'm tired of Miss Cory, anyway."

"He means boarding-school. Off somewhere. Bag and baggage."

"You mean he means—not here?"

"Mmmm . . . I guess he figures that too much unadulterated me and him—for a lively girl of your age—"

Glenna studied the sitter-in-judgment, her head on one side, her eyes narrowed.

"Wants me to go away, does he?" She meditated. "Hates the sight of me, does he?"

Hopping off her perch on her father's knees she transferred herself with a flutter of nainsook, a flap of slippers, and a leap, to the architect's.

"Here! Hang onto me! Dear-dear, what a man! He *wants* me to tumble off!"

When King had obeyed with a trace of new-found awkwardness, gathering her and all her glowing overlaps of wrists and ankles into the hollow of his arms, she settled down with a sigh from the heart and challenged him with a sickly-sentimental beam.

"Yes, King darling? Now just *exactly* what was it you were saying?"

He gave her a grin in return, all his face in it but the eyes. The eyes, somehow, weren't right. They slid off from her and towards Pizarro, and, not quite reaching Pizarro, fell of their own weight to the rug before the hearth.

"Git-the-divvil out of here!" he laughed uncertainly, unloosing her. "Get to bed!"

It was ended for the evening, as has been said,

and most inconclusively. Nevertheless by the simple fact that the question had been put it was already answered. You can't stop the clock's tick at night by yelling at it from the pillow of sleeplessness.

The thing when it arrived was even more of a dislocation than any of the three had envisioned. When you set out to break up housekeeping in the home of a dozen years there are bound to be readjustments in values to be made, rediscoveries of assets and liabilities forgotten in the attic of habit, and whole new categories of weaning-worries and growing-pains.

There was, for instance, the serio-comic miscarriage of the first attempt at a school. Two days after Glenna had been taken and inducted and left on her own in this carefully-chosen institution she was back home again.

Pizarro found her there when he came out from town on the "6.15." The breaking-up of housekeeping had been only in the metaphor of the spirit: Pizarro was still to live there and keep that much of habit going, and after all there would be holidays and vacations when the old régime would carry on. He had been arguing this to himself to-night all the way from the station, like setting-up exercises, pre-

paratory to the ordeal of his second evening in the deserted house (each of the two, successively, he had decided to spend "on a bat" in town, and at the last moment hadn't), and so it was a doubled shock to him when, upon entering with a studied bustle of bravado, he saw his daughter sitting there in her accustomed corner of the lounge.

It wasn't till after the moments of the first doubt of his senses and the first collision in his mind of anxiety and relief, that he observed that if she was sitting in her accustomed place she was not sitting in her accustomed way.

There was a tightness about her posture, about her mouth, her eyes, her neck-cords, and about the grip of the hands folded in her lap, that made her as queer a thing as if she had been absent two decades in place of two days.

Then there commenced a battle of hours, the more nervously horrible to Pizarro in that it was the sort of thing he had not in his most chicken-hearted pawings-over of their future dreamed could ever happen between Glenna and him.

It was less a battle than a siege, the assault all on one side, on the other the burden of defense. The

blank wall. The wall of tightness, of averted eyes, of sullen half-inch shakes or nods of the head, or, when too heavily pressed, of "No" and "Nothing."

Why had she come home?

The blank wall. Worse than a wall; a gulf of distance, across which the questions seemed unable to carry.

Wasn't the school all right? If not, what *was* the matter?

"Nothing."

Had she been too homesick?

"No."

What *had* happened then? What in the name of God had they done to her?

"Nothing."

He withdrew, exhausted. He tried the truce of dinner. She ate nothing, neither did he. And afterwards, when, at his attempt to have her in his lap and her head on his shoulder and the whole thing undertaken in a saner way, she eluded his hands and stood off with her back to him, as numb and as dumb as wood, he was of a sudden so frightened—so plain, downright scared to death—that he began to haze her again.

And what was it all about, this really very-nearly-serious tempest in the teapot of hysteria?

A cat.

It took King to find it out. He dropped in at about ten, at a moment when Pizarro himself was out of doors, taking a turn in the cool of the garden to see if that would help to let him think and stop his shouting. When the distracted fellow returned he found King in the house with a scared face of his own, not blanched but blotched all over, and Glenna on her knees with her head in her arms on his, and the walls down at last in a cataclysm of weeping.

"What the *devil* is it?" Pizarro bawled. "Do *you* know, King?"

"Ask her." The architect's lips were putty-colored.

The disheveled head in the arms shook fiercely and the sobs were in danger of another stoppage. Pizarro waved his fists. "I've asked her a hundred times, I tell you! No, King, you! Come out with it! My good God, man, is it as bad as that?"

And when King had told him, with all the cold sweat and throaty circumstance of one pronouncing a death sentence, Pizarro's first impulse was to let

his knees give way, flop down on the nearest furniture, and yell with mirth.

A cat! At that school there had been a cat. . . .

But of course! Now that Pizarro knew, he remembered. As a baby Glenna's wildest howling-spells were very often synchronous with the presence of a cat in the room, a fact but gradually established in the minds of those about her. Later on, when she continued to be upset by the chancest feline propinquity, and with more and more violence too, indulgence and solicitude had followed the path of least resistance and outlawed the whole tribe, an exclusion-act so effective that it came to be parcel of the laws of nature, and so, presently, forgot. And that is one of the dangers of a life as cloistered as Glenna's had been; debts lie at compound interest as surely as credits do.

So the laboring mountain had brought forth a cat! Pizarro wanted to cackle and do a war-dance. He felt like kissing Glenna and spanking her violently, all at the same time. He could hardly resist the impulse to "rough-house" his portentous-eyed, glum-mouthed friend. He did whack him on the shoulder.

"You'd think to look at you—my *Gawd!* I supposed at the very least they'd been tying her up by her thumbs. My— *Whew!* King, for the love of Mike—"

The architect moistened his lips and, appearing to see the humor of the thing at last, achieved an uncertain grin.

"You grandmother!" Pizarro cast back at him as he turned his attention to the girl.

He got his daughter on his lap this time, and rocked her, bumbling words in her top hair: "Poor baby—poor lamb—was it a jungle lion—was it a rotten old blood-thirsty panther-cat?"

He went on from that: "Now don't you worry any longer, my dearest. It's all going to be all, all, all right. They shall get rid of that beast, that's what they shall. I'll go to-morrow myself, I will, and tell them all about it, I will . . ."

Glenna was off his shoulder at that "tell them," holding herself away at stiff arm's-length, her eyes all pupils.

"No! No! No, no, no, no!"

Pizarro had an awful, helpless sense of walls going up again.

"*Now* what's wrong?"

"No, dad! No!"

King spoke from beyond the rug. "She'll want to go to some other school—I think that's what she's trying to say. Isn't it, Glenn? Some place where they won't have to—to be—to be—in on the secret?"

Her face answered for her, afire all at once with the shame of uncovered shame.

It made Pizarro gape.

"I—I don't—I swear I don't just see. Good Lord alive! It isn't as though it were anything—anything out of the way."

It was true; he didn't just see. His tutelary luck, having seen him otherwise so lavishly equipped for life, had winked a little perhaps in the matter of intuition—being his tutelary luck.

What Pizarro didn't just see was that what is nothing to one may be a considerable something to another; that our quirks and twists and side-slips from the human norm depend pretty directly for their magnitude on the amount and the secrecy of their inward watching; and that Glenna had had enough time in her walled-up girlhood to attend to that watching thoroughly.

He couldn't take hold of this with anything but the front end of his brain even now, and, though he never consciously pooh-poohed it after that dramatic experience of its effects it was only by stages marked by months and years that he was able to comprehend emotionally how deep this queer spot went in the tissue of her abundant health and beauty, how it humiliated her, and how it sapped at her self-trust. Perhaps he never did, quite.

In the meantime Glenna had been personally conducted to another school, much further from home, but catless, and the era of Pizarro's free foot and lone hand had definitely begun.

IV

It is a curious circumstance and an illuminating one that, given the thickness of their cronyship in the Pizarro home, Pizarro and King had very seldom crossed each other's paths in the outside world. The architect's headquarters were in New Haven; his hunting-ground the extreme frontier of the metropolis—New York's Wild East—as it crept toward him that way along the Connecticut shore. Very occasionally, not above once in the year, he and Pizarro would have a chance to lunch together in the city; that was the limit of their contact abroad.

It must have been a funny one in a way, and a little disconcerting to them both, seated across from each other in their strange habiliments of action, beneath the strange smoke and roaring of the mountain of the city, and in their eyes and about their mouths the vestiges of expressions each in the other's sight bizarrely alert, calculating, and perhaps a hint theatric, like seeing somebody from

home for the first time in a high hat. They would find it hard to know just what to talk about.

It is illuminating in that it shows the water-tight-compartment fashion of their two lives.

In his mid-thirties John Pizarro was what we have seen, a father wrapped up with an extraordinary and lasting intensity in his child, in his child's home, and in all that concerned it, which included the man who had loved and lost that child's mother, the woman whose memory, expanding as it withdrew, like smoke from an explosion, and taking on inevitably the diaphanous warm tints corradiated from the ends of the heavens, took on also the large and luminous simplicity of some antique mythology, some ancient, never-questioned tribal faith.

Little by little, as it were by dint of a cellular substitution, unperceived, the very substance of that memory was changing. All the flesh was gone, all the sumptuous passion of youth given the freedom of beauty. All that. In its place a queer thing came. This was the belated acceptance of the difference in their ages, Glenna's and his. It was as if, starting level at the mark of that week-end of wooing and that year of love where no such arbi-

trary things as dates of births existed, she, being dead, went on more swiftly than he, till in the end she had won back her rightful lead of half-again his years.

So he saw her now more clearly in one way than he had seen her then, always unobtrusively bending a little to him, slackening pace a little for him, because she loved to, and drawing about his boyish feet the fending witch-ring of her womanhood.

One night (when Glenna was ten or eleven) he dreamed about his father and mother. It was the first vivid dream he had had of his parents since his adolescence. And in the fantasy, when they turned from a long French window in the room to come to where he was standing (by his own fire) he saw that his father was Henry King and his mother Glenna Peterson. . . . It was a good minute after he awoke with a start before he could grin in the darkness.

This was one Pizarro at thirty-four. And then all the while there was another Pizarro. The Pizarro who walked out of the Grand Central every business-day morning, took an early afternoon edition from the news-man and hailed a taxicab; a man

who never seemed to change while others were changing; a fellow dipped in some Fountain. Too open-faced to be shrewd, but somehow lucky; so lucky that it became a habit of more than one among the "hard-boiled" to keep tabs on what Pizarro was buying and on what he sold. This was the town Pizarro, on his out-of-town side an enigma even to his partners, when he came to take them.

A man of a thousand acquaintances and no intimates, some one once said of him: "He makes friends fast, but no fast friends!"

Like most blanket epigrams this was not altogether true; it had enough truth in it, however, to make it a good epigram. Pizarro remained from first to last elusive. There was a quality in the man which seemed to say, "So far, and no farther": and although it hurt some people when they found themselves fetched up by something not unlike a rebuff—hurt them and drove them off and made ill-wishers of them—there were others wise and generous enough to perceive that it arose from neither hypocrisy of spirit nor poverty of eagerness; that it was a force operating outside his calculations and

desires; a locked door to which he no more had the key than they.

The door was the fear of entanglements, the instinctive mistrust of anything that might tamper with the contentment of the father of his daughter, the head of a hidden house.

To say that the door was locked is not to say there weren't windows. Back windows. By and large one can't expect a youngster in his twenties and thirties to stay eternally in the house. It is probable he slipped out from time to time and went excursioning. But even if he did, here's the point: it was never in company that mattered or conceivably could matter. It was never anything but incognito and masked. A kind of "slumming."

What convention the three roundheads and the one cavalier in him arrived at it is impossible to say; it's to be guessed that the three organized the expeditions, slipped the one out of the back window with trembling hands and averted eyes of eagerness, then ran to get their lashes and await his return; whatever it was it was different from his youth of the teens, when there were no conventions to

bother with. It was in a tentative way symptomatic. It was like the first gentle breaking of the news that he was a square peg in the round hole of the life his luck had given him.

With Glenna's departure for school (and King's inevitable falling off) it looked for a while as if anything might happen. His routine of existence was bound to be changed. Time and space do tell.

Save for rare holidays, space lay between them; the time was on his hands. There was still the dominant shaping influence of his life, the memory of the wife and mother, to keep him company; but there again space entered; somehow or other he had never been in the habit of taking it with him to town. And now, little by little and more and more, he remained in town.

There would come moments when, in the mirror perhaps of another's attitude toward him, he would glimpse himself in a novel and startling light. He would see himself for a wink as others saw him; a successful fellow, to all intents unencumbered, of an age when a good share of men nowadays are just beginning to think of marriage. The pull towards isolation was still there, but against it was the grow-

ing pull of another thing, quite as distinctly outside his will, his personal charm. Always great, it was doubled now. The charm of the rolling stone, backed for once by the worth of the gatherer of moss.

The visible fact was that he "was around more." He no longer had to catch a train. A vacuum had been created in his day-to-day world, and no nature ever abhorred a vacuum more than John Pizarro's did. Nor could an hiatus of these proportions be filled with persons who "didn't matter": that would have left it an hiatus still.

The answer is that, had he remained in New York, he would probably have walked into some one of a score of presentable pairs of arms and given Glenna a stepmother before her four years of schooling were done. Whether he mistrusted this, and, if he did, whether it was conscious or unconscious, cannot be said.

The visible fact was that he didn't remain in New York. War against Germany was declared by Congress in the middle of Glenna's first year, and to war Pizarro went. He was of the sort that would. Being able-bodied (almost too able-bodied, perhaps) and

having more than one stream of medieval romance in his blood, he would have preferred to march against the enemy, indeed, in almost any other capacity than the one required of him. The Battle of London was the only one he was ever allowed to fight; on a gray financial commission in a gray house on a gray square he went through to the end, doing what was known in those fabulous days as "his bit."

Nor was his bit done with the Armistice, nor even with his discharge. The policy of his firm, richer and bigger for the war at home, was to strike while the iron of the world was still molten, to expand, to establish foreign branches here and there where what money there was left didn't yet know what it was going to do with itself. So being on the ground in London, possessed of invaluable connections through his work of the war, he simply stayed on in the same gray house on the same gray square.

Even the following summer he didn't go home. He would have liked to. He wanted to see Glenna, have her with him, open the old house and live the old wrapped-up deep-river life again with the beloved kid. But the Branch wasn't on its feet yet;

he didn't like to ask his partners; he couldn't, that was all. And King was going to look out for the youngster as he had been doing other vacation-times. He was going to take her on a spree in Maine.

Pizarro spent the summer in harness, making his week-ends at his manager's cottage near Southampton on the shore. He liked the Crawleys, husband and wife; they were of his own age and his own taste in many things. All this long while still dimly and uneasily loyal to something or other he had almost ceased to keep track of, and as purblindly groping for at least a temporary shelter for it, he had made of Fern Crawley, happily married and in love with her husband, his only woman friend in England. He let himself go, with these two, as he had seldom done. All that summer they were "John" and "Archie" and "Fern." His admiration and liking for Crawley grew with his curiously dependent affection for Crawley's wife; with their morning dips, their tea-time picnics, their Sunday afternoons in a motor all over the south counties, Pizarro's vacuum was filled, filled delightfully and no chance for harm, and filled with people who mattered, certainly. Nor could anything else he could have done have

been of such value, on the face of it, for the future strength of the Branch.

So much for Pizarro's heart-insurance.

One bright day his luck took forty winks. (Or was it just one wink?) Crawley walked out into the wrong current and was drowned.

That was in September. By the middle of the following spring Pizarro was lying awake nights trying to find answers to two questions. One was: to which one ought he to speak first, to Fern, or to that child of his in America? The other: if it was to be to Glenna, what in the devil was he to say?

It happened as it happens with most of the alternatives we put before ourselves. He did neither and both. Becoming aware very presently that there was no need of "speaking to" Fern, and yet all at odds with his conscience's memory, he cabled Glenna to end her education that day and hour (two months before she would have been graduated) and sail on such and such a steamer direct for Southampton and her dad.

Even here Fern Crawley didn't need to be spoken to, to know what was up. She simply took hold of

the problem in mechanics, where he fumbled at it. Without drawing any diagrams or wanting any drawn, she discovered that on the day of the steamer's arrival she was to be, if not in Southampton, at least handy to it, having decided to run down and give the cottage at Breton Shingle an April airing.

"Why, Fern, that's grand! Now if, when the kid gets in—if there's time—I'd like so much to have you meet her—you know—"

"Why not lunch? Pop in the char-à-bancs, that's the lad, and you'll be with us in a second."

"Why, Fern, that's grand!"

A period of time slightly in excess of a year, falling at the impressionable age of twenty, had formed the life of John Pizarro for the decade and a half that followed. The day of his daughter's arrival in England was to shape it if anything more powerfully, and perhaps for a greater number of years. There's the mathematics of the thing.

Pizarro had taken Fern's suggestion about the char-à-bancs with a pinch of the salt of persiflage: he would have Glenna out in a motorcab in a quarter of the time, of course. But then when it came to the

doing of it they went by the humbler and more populous conveyance after all.

Pizarro didn't decide this; it was no more a matter of decision than a dog's eating of grass. He didn't know what he wanted, but what he wanted was this: crowds around him and his daughter, and at all costs time staved off.

That drive of six miles between the hedgerows, the patchwork fields beyond all misted with spring bloom and all dappled with the shadows of little clouds borne in a Channel wind as soft as summer, was in these material furnishings precisely as he had envisioned it. Yet it was as far, in its reality, from the picture he had made as the South Pole is from the North.

He had imagined himself whisked through ten or fifteen minutes with his long-legged school-girl daughter, half hoyden wild, half snuggling sweet, and all eyes out of the cab window and exclamations in a stream over the cozy shape of this, the age-weathered tint of that, the breathless newness of everything in this land of the old.

He had not imagined himself riding in a public bus, wedged in with two dozen strangers, and the

strangest of all the strangers the young woman by his side.

He had wondered what he was going to say to Glenna about Fern. He hadn't guessed the half. It hadn't occurred to him to wonder what he was going to find to say to her about anything under the sun. And now, for fear of finding himself turning on her, gripping her arm, shouting aloud at her in the startled hearing of half the lower middle class of South England: "Who in Heaven's name are you, Glenn? When—how—how did you ever manage to be this?"—for fear of it now he kept his arms folded and his mouth shut.

Glenna too held her peace. It had the appearance of just that—holding her peace—as against his keeping his mouth shut. Actually, there was no peace behind that mien of vernal womanhood, unhurried, unworried, and unamazed. There was no tranquillity of spirit within that posture of a sustained and almost luminous tranquillity that had taken his breath away from the moment when he had seen her coming toward him down the gangplank and heard her saying to him: "I'd forgotten how young you are."

Actually, beneath this, the girl's whole soul was in a fidget and her imagination all at loose ends. Given time in the week of her voyage to pile up vague alarms and intuitive suspicions, and having nothing concrete to turn them on, they had taken it into their own hands and settled about that laconic and peremptory cable message, that (as it seemed) gratuitous jerk out of her map of life into the uncharted. And now if her attitude was not one of challenge, it was at least of judgment reserved, and only with all the good will she could muster. It was this that gave to her trait to-day the quality which made people turn a second and a third time to look at her, this effect of a stirred and vibrant composure, a negative surcharged with a positive, an acquiescence vital with revolt. . . .

Fern had known, without having to think about it, just what she would say for a beginning. She would look at John's daughter and then she would look at John and she would say (and she had known somehow that she would mean it): *"Isn't* she a *darling!"*. . . And now, come to it, she said nothing of the kind. . . .

Of that day at Breton Shingle (or of the six hours

of it from noon till well toward sundown) it is impossible to give an adequate story. It is hard to describe at all for precisely the same reason that it was hard for the three actors in the drama to play it through to any even half-decently plausible curtain without going gibbering mad. And this was because there weren't any lines and there wasn't any business. And worse yet, none of them knew with any certainty what was happening and what it was all about.

No, it was intolerably weird. It was as if they, the actors, were asked to let the piece play itself through on the stage without their interference, while they were to do nothing for their hire but sit in the wings and have tea. Tea and muffins and bright red jam, and dialogues and trialogues as bright and as sweet, and smiles all around. And a puttering circuit of the rose garden. And a go at pebble-skipping on the beach. And a long turn in the woods—good for the lungs, breathing that way —jolly for the figure, striding so. . . .

Hour by hour, scene by scene. Worse than pantomime because there weren't even gestures to relieve the silence and release the sense.

Perhaps Fern Crawley, being especially of the sort that doesn't need to be spoken to, came nearest to knowing what it was all about. In a way at once nebulous as nightmare and pitilessly vivid, she could follow the part of the thing that was happening to her. As if quite unconnected with the others. As if she stood at a distance, alone. "You will perceive that there are neither invisible wires nor hidden springs. . . ." John wasn't doing it to her; his hands were behind his back and his face the other way. John's daughter wasn't doing it; all her words and all her acts were graciousness, even faintly abstracted graciousness, as if she too stood scrupulously separate, trying to follow, not the rôle she herself was playing, but the rôle that was playing her.

What Fern Crawley had to stand and watch herself being made to suffer was this: a gradual stripping away from her of vitality and comeliness and wit; a mysterious process of denuding and looting which, being at no hands, no hands could arrest; a progressive deterioration of all the qualities that tell a woman she is desirable; an aging, physical and spiritual; a swift and swifter down-slide into mediocrity; a need, growing in the end almost insup-

portable, to run away and lose herself from sight and knowledge in the crowd of the dull-eyed, the nameless, and the unremarkable of earth. . . . For there was only one who was remarkable at Breton Shingle that springtime afternoon, and no one knew it more quickly than Fern Crawley did.

John and Glenna Pizarro bade her good-by at the Top Breton station at six. They waved back and forth as the train moved out.

They had all had a gorgeous day. Nothing could have been more nearly perfect for Glenna's first afternoon in England. Thanks and good-by. Or rather—*au revoir!* . . . And as she stood there gazing after the end carriage in the level rays of a sun just clear of the clouds gathering for a wet night, Fern Crawley's hair, her glory, seemed to her to have passed beneath a blight; where there had been ropes of gold hiding fluent fires there were strings of straw; she felt her suppressed freckles coming out; she was weary to death, it was a long way home, and it was going to rain. . . .

They met the rain in Surrey. It came in a fine drift through the window, and they let it; happily they had the compartment to themselves.

They too were tired, but they didn't show it, unless their long silences were a sign. They sat bolt up, elbow to elbow, staring out into the watery darkness where nothing could be seen. On Glenna's face there was set the same quarter-smile of separate graciousness, the same posture of waiting with interest but without impatience for the other's move, the look of a Mona Lisa caught years younger, still virgin, and wearing her veil of mystery with an air a hint too resolute, knowing alone how thinner than gossamer it was to cover the victory she had plucked out of those nine topheavy chances of defeat.

Certainly poor Pizarro didn't know. The expression of the face he set toward the streaming night was the half-embarrassed lip-smile of the lad brought up to be braver than lions, lost out alone in the woods. . . . He thought it was walls again, like that other time. Not even guessing it was a veil of mystery, he couldn't suspect how thin it was, nor mark how moment by moment it was growing thinner, till its hems were in tatters and whole gaps went through.

He didn't even know what had happened when,

of a sudden, Glenna came over on his shoulder in a heap, and getting one of his lapels in a fist, began to weep without a sound.

"Tired, Glenn?"

"Yes, I'm awfully tired. The voyage and ev-ev-everything."

"Poor darling, of course, of course."

He reached up and hooded the light to save her tired eyes, and so they sat for a while in the dark and the rain-drift, holding each other tight.

Saving Glenna's eyes, Pizarro saved his own. For a moment the lost-boy look had left them in the relief of getting Glenna back again. But presently it began to return, and queerer than ever. The lost fellow had gotten into an infinitely further wood and the night had come, so that he couldn't see what manner of fantastic trees there were that grew there, nor how they stood—unless, by some uneasy flair of prevision he got half a sense of them, already, ranging a ring of chimera about him, beyond the touch of his fingertips, their boles set too thickly to let a body pass, like bars.

At some nameless station where there was a ten-minute stop for baskets he got out and took a turn

about. There were two roofs over two footways; he walked up and down exactly between them, his collar turned up and his shoulders hunched to the rain falling through the gap, as if he couldn't find dryness anywhere. What he was thinking all of a sudden was that he was in a foreign land. What he was thinking (with a curious half-sense of dismay) was that he had never seen in his life a woman like this amazing woman who happened to be his child.

When he got back into the compartment it was half crowded with newcomers, and Glenna, relaxed in a corner and her face betrayed in its own ingenuous peace, unawares now, had gone to sleep. . . .

Cablegrams took some time; there were many things that had to be done; and even if there were more than eventually got themselves attended to, it was still the better part of two weeks before the Pizarros sailed for home.

They were going to see Mrs. Crawley several times in that fortnight: why they seemed fated to fail on each occasion was beyond their saying.

But Fern was not of the sort that requires speaking to.

V

SOMETHING had happened to Pizarro in England. No one in New York could say what it was, or even make a good guess at it. Except that too much luck, also, goeth before a fall. Whatever the nature of the mysterious cave-in, its effects very soon began to show themselves.

His partners, awaiting his return with forced patience for a fuller enlightenment than his cables had given them, got none. The partnership was doomed from that day of course; though, even so, it might have taken longer in dying had Pizarro let it.

There was no visible change in the fellow; all agreed in that. He was still the gilded heir-apparent in all outward guise, the Playboy of the Street. Simply, the magic touch was gone. Simply, it didn't work any more. There were a few keen enough to see that this was because he had lost the possession that had carried that magic with it, his unique, his earth-refreshed and utterly priceless nerve. There were fewer who realized that that too was but a

manifestation; that what he had lost was a more fundamental thing, his interest, his eagerness. Or, as some might put it who were not sorry, his ambition.

That an able-bodied, sane man of thirty-eight, having got together enough of a property to keep him in comfort, should in cold blood decide to retire from business and spend the rest of his days in the quieter excitements of voyage and contemplation, would not seem so strange a thing in any society but ours. But in ours, where the chiefest category of merit is reserved to those who, unable to find anything else to do with their specialized faculties, their specialized imaginations, and their specialized desires in the ripeness of their years, work on and work on for a changed wage, the ultimate recompense of being allowed to die "with their boots on," "in the harness," "standing up"—in our philosophy an act like this of John Pizarro's, staying his hand deliberately when the really "big pickings," the really worth-while, man's-size plums of his seventeen years of pruning, hung on the bough to take, calls for some explanation that common sense can believe, and quickly, unless "retirement" wants to run

the hazard of other names people can find to call it by, such as "quitting" and "laying down." For it can't be escaped, there is a definite stigma attached to that sort of dropping out of the ranks in a community which doesn't yet seem able to rub its eyes open to the fact that the last of the free land is under the plow near a freight-siding and all the bears and the wild Indians are dead.

If it wanted an explanation, none was ever to be given. As for Pizarro himself, he didn't care. Why should he?

It is to be bet that he *did* care, and that it hurt him. He had been too close to that philosophy and too deep in the game. In every gesture of his thereafter there was something symptomatic of a restlessness based on a native contempt for idlers; his very playing with the flight-idea had its deepest roots in shame.

This restlessness showed itself in the first important act of his "vacation." His "vacation" was the euphony under which, after a few months of shorter and shorter weeks in town and longer weekends not there, he ceased coming at all. He decided to take a long vacation, the first of his business

career. Something rather prominent and triumphal was made, in such of the papers as happened not to know that it was an obituary they printed, of his and his daughter Glenna's progress to Florida. That he had such a thing as a daughter was to a great many the important word in that news.

For a while they continued to be kept track of in their flittings and counter-flittings about the peninsula, an item from here, a stick from there. The last news printed about them that winter was that Pizarro had bought a boat.

He saw this boat when he was walking one morning on the quay of a little harbor, and it was as if she made a meaning and deliberate gesture to that man at the end of his rope of futility and bewilderment, disorientation, restlessness, and doubt. She made it without stirring at her buoy and in conspiracy with the sea beyond her white upper-works and the sky behind her strong masts. It was as if she said: "Here is space; here is escape."

Pizarro went away. And within a quarter of an hour he was back again to stand and stare into the blue. Space and escape. It was the blatantest of claptrap, of course, born of his need; the purest of

"dope" to allay the itch of his nerves and nip off and turn back underground the growth of his inscrutable consternation. As if a dog may escape by galloping any number of miles through space the can that's tied to its tail. . . .

Dope also works in a mysterious way; and the way it worked in Pizarro was this. "By Jingo, that's an idea now! That would be fun. Damned good for a fellow too."

He went off to the hotel and got Glenna and brought her back.

"Look at her, Glenn. Isn't she a beauty? How would you like being a young female sailor for a while?"

"We? You and I? My dear man, do you know what? I've *always!*"

"Honest to God? You mean to say you'd really like to sail—"

"To absolute China! To Madagascar and Zanzibar!" She squeezed his hand, and pulling it open of a sudden kissed the palm. "And, oh, my dear—Spice Islands!"

He had to sit down on a sponge-crate.

"Well," he said, "you needn't gasp so. You had

a great-grandfather who went to at least all those places in a ship of his own not so much bigger than that boat there—and not so much older than you are now when he went. . . . That's right; Captain Nathaniel P. Purdy. I hadn't thought of him in years. . . ."

He hadn't thought of him because he hadn't needed to. And now, at need, the old ancestral youngster returned to whack him on the back with just the weight of scorn his unconscious purposes required; and Pizarro broke out in a vein of musing, half exultation and half disdain.

"Lord, but we're a soft crowd these days. We're a safety-first, hot-house gang, we are! Think of those old boys, Glenn, just think of 'em; commanders at eighteen, afraid of nothing in heaven or earth or hell, fists like hammers, jaws like crocodiles, and hard as nails. And then think of what we've come to. Take any hundred men on lower Broadway, any day in the week; feel of their biceps; ask them what they stand for; what their idea of a great man is; what their own ambitions are— No, you don't need to do all that—*just look at 'em, Glenn!*"

So, with the shade of Captain Nathaniel to nudge his elbow and back him up, he came upon an unsuspected and romantic (and quite temporary) justification. And if the ghostly merchant-mariner of Salem, fearful indeed of nothing in the world, neglected to tell him that, as much as the hope of any concrete treasures in Cathay, it was precisely the terror of heaven and hell gnawing at his Puritan bowels, and of hell's earthly stigmata, unsuccess and idleness, that drove him out as early as he could go, and as fast and far and often as he could go, on his roaring circumnavigations—if he neglected to mention that part of it to a descendant with unguessed gnawings of his own, so much the better for Pizarro's little holiday of dope.

The hour was tropical, and that helped. In this deserted harbor-corner, done out in all the paraphernalia of a runaway's world, boats resting in readiness, symbols of severance, palms and heavy flowers of oblivion, and, behind all, the cerulean backdrop of no-man's ocean, and penetrating everywhere the perfumes and stenches of the exotic unknown, Pizarro saw Glenna and himself of a sudden in the new guise of castaways, sole survivors of a

ship gone down, thrown on their own and fatally interdependent. And if there was in this a pretty strong flavor of melodrama, there was also another and a deeper justification.

For now (while it lasted) Pizarro seemed to see through the muddle of the thing that had disturbed and mystified and shamed him, the puzzle of the sudden atrophy in mid-career of all his other eagernesses, the centering of the whole of his soul's vehemence upon the one life, his daughter's. No longer need he feel (like the big boy in the school play) all knees and elbows and downcast eyes, over this business of being wrapped up in Glenna—of being unable to see any one else but Glenna in the world. In the world of the island where they were marooned there was not alone no other person so vividly alive in inner grace and outward loveliness, there was no other person alive at all. Prisoners of space, it would have been an odd thing had he let the thought of men squabbling for dollars on the far side of the globe subtract from his time and his forces; on the desert island Glenna had to eat, and he had to find the coconuts and the mussel-shells.

He felt enormously explained and acquitted by this chain of fantasy. He flung an arm around the girl and shook her in sheer exuberance of release.

"Look there, Glenna; now that she's swung around. Can you read it? *Chimera.*"

"Is she for sale though, dad?"

"To a man of my caliber," he informed her, throwing out a solemnly humorous chest, "that's the last and the least of details."

"I know." She turned to gaze up at him, in her eyes a light of admiration as whimsical, and beneath that as really real, as his own gesture had been. "You're stunning. I've read about you, John Pizarro. Oh, I know. . . ."

There was a dance at their hotel that evening, and they stayed up for it. They were new there and unknown; passing incognito was growing an easy thing. Dancing together, isolate in the whirl of nameless and faceless people, or sitting out together on the starlit balcony, the complex and populous earth screened out of existence by hangings of frond and leaf and bloom, and somewhere beyond and above the foliage and deeper in starlight the masts in the anchorage, and two of them, the

Chimera's (she *was* for sale, after all, and so was her crew of two)—moving in unison or relaxed in identical peace, the day's metaphor of the island of castaways was only endorsed and deepened by the night.

From time to time Pizarro would say: "You ought to have some of those kids to dance with. Introductions ought to be simple enough. All I'll have to do—"

"Why bother?"

"Because—why, just because—after all, you might like to have a round or so of real dancing."

" 'Why don't you speak for yourself, John?' "

It was extraordinary, the thrill—what we would call the "kick"—he got out of that each time.

"Bosh, Glenn!"

"Besides, poor patient precious, I don't feel much like it to-night. And besides, there's plenty of time."

Once he got up and made a circuit of the dark balcony alone. He came back with a queer-looking face.

"That business, Glenn—that boat—" He seemed to have difficulty with his words. "Do you know—I believe I will. I believe I'll go. . . . But I've

been thinking—you—now *you're* another proposition altogether. What would you say to my—"

"What are you talking about?"

"Well, Glenn, here it is. You've got a life to cut out for yourself. You've got your friends to make and keep. You're just about bound to get back into the game. Good Lord, no; you can't go gallivanting around the earth—"

"John Pizarro," she said, "come here and sit down." When he had obeyed she hitched forward in her chair to study him, her head wagging slowly and her lips pursed with an air of ineffable solicitude. "Don't be an ass," she said at length, laying a hand on his corrugated brow. And presently: "That's better! That's the lad!"

VI

They didn't sail to "absolute China" that season. For months they were simply breaking-in, and this in itself was sufficiently exciting to make the time memorable, an Elysian truce to self-naggings, self-picturings, and dark bewilderments of all kinds.

They both grew brown, ate enormously, and slept like the dead. The first premonitory pounds of softness that had begun to threaten Pizarro in the last year or so sloughed off and the rib-work of a decade ago reappeared. His charm now, no longer backed by the visible worth of the moss-gatherer, was frankly, adventurously, piratically, of the rolling-stone.

It was interesting to see in him the release of aptitudes and predilections dormant till now in blood that came down in at least three streams from seafaring stocks; throw-backs unanticipated and sometimes spectacular, as when, caught out crewless in a squall of almost cyclonic proportions (if soon over) he did what he really didn't know enough

to do, made sure of his lee, let the halyards run, and then, shutting Glenna below and standing aft with his arms around the mizzen performed for five minutes in the driving welter a kind of war-dance, lifting his water-logged boots one after the other, slowly, like an offended elephant, and casting into the flood a counterflood of defiance and abuse, jeering it, goading it, damning it with a string of indignities and scurrilities he had never learned in any town.

And afterwards when, as is the way with squalls, the wind-cloud had vanished and the sun come out and nothing to show for the tempest but the tops of the billows running white, it was amusing to see the "kick" he got out of it, the innocent-hearted capital he made of it, swaggering like the cock that has crowed the sun up, delightfully, and basking in Glenna's admiration and hovering solicitude. Her eyes widened and darkened by excitement, her hair in a wild halo, and her brown limbs still pearled with the wet, it seemed to Pizarro she had never been quite so surely the flower of the ages, so incomparably the darling of the gods of youth. And he had never been so happy in his life.

So winter and early spring went, like a drunken sailor's money, and the laziest of the bird migrations were going up the coast. Not yet for "absolute China," the black yawl followed the birds. With the aging of summer its movements too appeared to grow decrepit. The enterprise born of a dream of far and fabulous ports of escape was already beginning to cling to nearer and less fabulous harbors. It found itself following the migrations of birds of another feather; the sorts that nest in yacht-clubs and tea-gardens and antique-furniture sales. And if it didn't stay long anywhere, if its flights were often, they were also short.

Pizarro was lying to himself. This was no fault of his; he didn't know it was lying, because he *couldn't* know it was lying, being the man he was. And since he had to say something, he said the nearest word that looked the most like a reasonable truth.

"The only thing in the world of interest to me any more is that Glenn should have a good time."

Perceiving in a cloudy way that she wasn't having an especially good time in this place, with this covey of people still nameless and faceless (and

resolutely ignoring his own clandestine and traitorous relief) he got up anchor and drifted on to the next. Always to just the next, because that called for no decision.

He had come to the point where the last thing he wanted to be asked to do was to decide. Like a fellow "dead to the world" after a wild night out, the part of a man that watches while he sleeps counted the clock-ticks and dreaded the alarm.

A gap that had opened in their life was closed again that summer. King met them at Marblehead for an August holiday and made a seasick trip with them outside to Nantucket and Buzzards Bay.

In common with most reunions of the kind it was an adventure in mixed happiness. There was all that persisted from the past to be sorted and counted for clear salvage. But then there were other things, the whole new bent and greenwood of their season of separation, to be viewed and weighed (in sidelong glances, each stolen while the others seemed not to be looking) with something between a catch of the breath and a sinking feeling.

That takes time. It took King longer than it took the others; to all appearance, at least. Outwardly,

and perhaps nine-tenths inwardly, *they* were ready, after the first few parlous hours of pawing King over, to decide that he was all there and begin to carry on. . . . "Good old King! Grand? Grand's no name for it! Not a hair, not the tilt of an eye-winker, changed! How the man can do it! . . ."

Glenna had always adored him. From earliest memory he had loomed as something even more than that composite grandfather, rich uncle, and maiden aunt he had figured himself. In her infant eyes he had taken on one attribute of deity, omniscience. Her father might be omnipotent—so far as she could see she was the only one of the three omnipresent—but King *knew*. King could see. Knowing and seeing, he could judge. Even as a very little girl she seemed to sense the fact that her father had not been in this world as long as King had; and in the later age of idols there was this difference between her worships—while her admiration of her father was of a kind that would sometimes make her heart stop beating, the sort she felt for King would start it going again. Nor did it subtract from the comfort of knowing omniscience was about the place, that she was at liberty to sit in its lap and call it out-

rageous names and tell it candidly that it was growing fat. . . .

She sat in King's lap now, in the wicker deck-chair, and it made them all laugh. . . . "You elephant!" . . . "Elephant yourself, my dear!" . . . After that it was all right. It was old times. It was grand. . . .

They had five days of it together, and it continued to be grand; even though King suffered from seasickness a part of the time.

That seasickness, even if he was the only one who knew it, was a godsend. It let him, when otherwise it might have seemed funny, sweat cold sweat. It allowed him sometimes, studying his friends, to pass off for a queasiness at the pit of the stomach a vertigo at the pit of his soul. He had indeed been longer in the world than Pizarro had.

For five days, then, he sat in judgment, a little green about the gills. And the last evening, keeping Pizarro on deck when Glenna had said good-night and gone below, he made a bungling and embarrassed attempt to do the impossible, that is to say something without saying anything.

He cleared his throat to begin with; when he had

finished he had the despairing sense that he was still just clearing his throat.

About John's vacation . . . Making a regular one of it, eh? . . . That's the idea. . . . Supposed, though, he'd soon be back now on the old stamping-grounds, "knocking 'em dead" . . . And besides, there was Glenn. . . .

"Looking fine, don't you think she is, King?"

"Mmmmm. . . . Mmmm—ye-es—all the same. . . ."

"Do you like that cigar? Found a fellow in Tampa makes 'em."

"Mmmmm. . . . All the same, she ought to—don't you think yourself, Johnnie?—see maybe a little more of her own—well—"

"Lord! Isn't that just what she's doing? In the past six months if she's met one youngster she's met a thousand! A thousand, King!"

"Does she like 'em?"

"Oh—well—so-so. And, anyway, I can't force her to be crazy over anybody she—"

"Give her a chance, do you?"

"What?"

"I mean— By the way, is she going to college?"

"That's up to her, King. Absolutely. I want her to do what she wants to. Literally."

"I'm thinking, John, especially, of *you.*"

"Me? Huh! King, tell me one thing. Did you ever see me looking better in my life? . . . I don't feel a day over twenty-five."

King opened his mouth but couldn't get the tongue away from the roof of it. If he could only have done it! Only have blurted: *"Well, you ought to!"* If he could only have yelled out: *"That's what I'm talking about, damn your wooden head! . . ."*

A word to the wise. . . . The trouble was that Pizarro wasn't wise. He was a gentleman. He was that rare thing, at once the noblest and the most pitifully inadequate, a thoroughbred. And along the precipice road where the donkeys may safely be turned loose to graze and find their way, the genius of the race makes a practice of blindfolding the thoroughbred. Not seeing the horrid chasms he can't be afraid of them. All he can be afraid of is things he knows must be there around him, as horrid as chasms, and the edges of them rotten everywhere. . . .

Next morning while the dinghy was being put

overboard to take King ashore, Pizarro said (looking at his knuckles all the while): "I've been thinking your sermon over, old man. I guess you're right. Glenn ought to go to college; I ought to go to work. I guess it comes to this: the old *Chimera* is for sale."

King looked at his own knuckles. His cheeks reddened slightly and he sucked at them. He was a gentleman too.

"A chimera," he mused, "is a handy beast for fairy tales, but not so good to keep house with, after all."

The tone, rather than the words, got Pizarro's eyes away from his knuckles. He looked at the older man with an expression of puzzled inquiry.

"I don't know—I'll confess it—I never did know just what a chimera is supposed to be. But I do know one thing, King; it's been fun."

King's cheeks darkened by another shade. He said something or other about his bags. It is as painful for the man who tells the story as it is for the one who misses the point.

At the station where they had taken him he kissed Glenna, whacked Pizarro, told them he ex-

pected to see them very shortly up at the old diggings, and climbed aboard.

In the train he began to sweat cold sweat again. He looked car-sick.

"What a mess in the making! What a perfectly hell-awful mess!"

VII

King waited in vain to see the Pizarros in the old diggings; the house wasn't opened up. If the *Chimera* was placed for sale, it didn't sell. Part of the winter his friends were abroad; he heard from them in sporadic scribbles posted here and there, Cannes, Malta, Florence, the Balearics, Egypt, Algiers.

Scribbles, just that. Many hours of his shut-in season King spent in study of those gathering exhibits, pouring out more globules of cold sweat, bringing to bear the deductive powers and patience of an armchair sleuth upon the question that nagged his thoughts—whether the unanalyzed restlessness, the nervous negligence and haste which were written plain in Pizarro's post-cards were or were not beginning to be legible in Glenna's longer rhapsodies of delight in perspectives forever changing.

He couldn't swear to it, yes or no. For the life of him he couldn't tell.

"But what a mess! What a complete and awful hell of a mess, for the innocent bystander!"

At other times it was too much. Revulsion laid hands on him. He had a thoroughgoing laugh at himself. "You ghost-gazer! You poor hysterical snoopomaniac! What is there to go on? Not one single-solitary damned thing!"

Nevertheless, once they were back on his side of the ocean, he let a notable contract go and spent two nights in a day-coach in order to join them at the earliest moment possible.

This was at a southern harbor where Pizarro had had the *Chimera* sent to be in readiness for them. King had come with the heart of his hope in the mouth of his fear, to look and see. By virtue of a coincidence of chances, the one that his train was a moment early and the other that the Pizarros were a moment late, it was given him to see them for the sum of those moments as it were through a peep-hole, in the spotlight of their unawareness of him standing and waiting there.

It was a small town. The street up which they came was divided between the sunshine and the tiny leaf-shadows of early springtime, arrows through gossamer, and a wedge of water standing bright blue in the further end. They weren't alone

in this street; the business of the community went on, cars and buggies lining sidewalks before embowered stores, inhabitants white and black dawdling about their bread-and-butter affairs, a scow in tow across the harbor gap. . . . They were not alone, his friends; they were part of what in a place like this might pass for a crowd. But the thing King saw vividly was that they *were* alone, and that they were no part of any crowd.

It was for but an instant, naturally; a snapshot; a curious and quite external flair.

Perhaps it was their whiteness. Coming along arm in arm, all flannel and snowy linen and pipe-clay, and all out of key with the solider values of reality, they gave the imagination's eye a start. As at first view of one of those "spook pictures" brought in evidence at a conclave of spiritualists, the mind suspected a double-exposure. The town was there, the Pizarros were there, but mutually they "showed through." That was it. There was ground there, and people and dogs and horses walked on it visibly, but just as visibly the Pizarros' pure white shoes weren't walking on it at all. They were walking on the strand of a desert island lost in some Ocean of

Never Was. And to King's eyes, sharpened by this fantasy, they had a look about them of fineness; especially in Pizarro all superfluities seemed to have been tooled down, if not to the bone, at least to the quick of nerve and sinew, by the castaways' spiritual regimen of never-altogether-satisfying clams and coconuts and never-ceasing (if never realized) vigilance.

All this, as has been said, in two winks. Then of course the whole thing was gone; they had spied him amongst his bags and set about him. Kisses, poundings, protests, confusion. "Well, well, well!" So here the family was again, and again it was grand.

King made two weeks of it this time. Recollecting his seasickness they stayed just where they were moored, a fortnight of halcyon idleness. Eating, sleeping, waking, talking, bathing in the water, bathing in the soft air of a southern April, eating, talking, sleeping again. . . .

This time King didn't wait till his last evening to clear his throat; his nerves couldn't manage it that long. He said to Pizarro one afternoon, when Glenna was safely asleep in a blanket on the cabin-trunk and they with the after-deck to themselves: "Johnnie, why don't you clear out?"

"Eh?"

"Beat it! All by your lonesome, you know."

"Beat it, eh?" Pizarro lay back in his chair and worked the words over again with his lips. His attitude was judicial, but something was happening to his face, a subtle yellowing and desiccation of the skin. When he resumed, his voice was lowered.

"What you're trying to say, without saying it, King, is that Glenn isn't getting quite a square deal, eh? Ought to be definitely *at* something. Definitely planted somewhere. Getting her roots. . . ."

"Not altogether that. That's part of it. What's needed just now—and John, my son, it's needed—is—oh, hell take it, John—a breathing-space!"

King bit the lip that had said it, waiting. But Pizarro didn't look up. Staring at the points of his knees he nodded thoughtfully.

"Yes. She does. She does want a breathing-space."

"I mean—the one that *damn* well wants it, John—is *you.*"

Once more, to the architect's surprise, Pizarro accepted it without any of last year's nonsense. He appeared to turn it over with a scrupulous de-

tachment. But in the airy cubicle of the awning's shadow walled around with brightness his face had grown the color and texture of parchment, and his eyes were still on his knees. In the end he said: "Which way do you mean 'want'? Need? Or desire?"

Then, before the other could get an answer together, Pizarro was on his feet, loosening the painter of the dinghy alongside and saying under his breath as he eyed the sleeper on the house: "Come on, old man; I want some exercise."

Cast off in the dinghy, with King at a loss in the sternsheets and the sun hot overhead, he put out the oars and rowed. He pulled a racing-stroke till his face was moist again and crimson, shipped the sweeps without reason or warning and bobbing up and down in broad harbor, the *Chimera* two hundred yards astern and the open sea ahead, he began at a rush:

"Because I *don't want* a breathing-space. And because I *do need* one. God—God! You don't know, King. . . . But, then, neither do I. . . . But maybe you do, though. King, here, friend, look at me! You started this, to-day; damn you, finish it!

Be the doctor! . . . Tell me this; what's eating me? What in the black name of the Devil is wrong?"

King sat there dumb. He had started it, yes; but already it had outdistanced him. In the Pizarro he had known for twenty years, the serene and simple captain of his soul, this sudden blood and sweat was worse than dumbfoundering; it was dumbfounderingly sad.

"Is it you *can't* say, King? Or *won't* say? Or what? For the pity of God, here we are, you and I. What's wrong? What has taken what I was and made what I am? . . . I've a daughter. That happens. That I chance never to have seen any human being that could hold a candle to her in any one of a dozen ways—I suppose that happens too, in the best regulated of families. Doesn't it? I want her to have nothing that isn't happiness; I want her, most savagely, to have everything that is. Not just average either; the cream of the vivid cream, the top of the living wave. . . . There's your woodpile, King: where's the nigger? . . . *What the devil's wrong?"*

King licked his lips. "Well—what *is* wrong?"

"I'm asking you. You're the wise man; I'm not. You know things; I don't."

And there was the very meat of the trouble; King knew too much. Omniscience had turned on him to rend him. As helplessly as the other by his ignorance, he saw himself gagged and shackled by the very plenitude of the things he knew. It made him sick, sick, sick.

He forced himself to take one step forward: "This 'breathing-space,' John. If you say you need it, you must have some idea—"

"Hold on, King! You were the one! You said it first."

"You said it second. Breathing-space from what?"

"From something that's come to be the breathless terror of my life."

"What's that?"

"Glenn is going to be taken away from me, some day, sooner or later. Bound to be. Look at her! . . . *Then what?*"

Their glances collided. Both of them winced. And King groaned: "That ought to show you."

"What ought?"

"The fact that just the thought of some other person's having your daughter makes you look like —like death on the rack."

"Well, then, tell me. King, for God's sake, do I have to sit here begging of *you?* For God *Almighty's* sake, draw the diagram!"

If he hadn't known so much, that gray man King. If he hadn't to see so many sides!

Pizarro tumbled his oars out and rowed, making the blunt shell jump. Ten strokes, that was all; then he was quiet again. On the broad surface of the harbor, flat as glass in the windless afternoon, the curvet left its character, like the wing-flash of a bird startled and half swerving back for a look at the alarm.

He began speaking in another tone now, pitched in a more guarded key, as earlier on the yawl's deck, as if there were other ears to overhear him in that emptiness reared between sea and sky.

"I was wrong, King; I do want a breathing-space; and I'm going to grab it. I'm going to fade into the blue, one of these fine days. Where? I don't know. I only know I'm not going to stand and wait with a humble rump till the run of events kicks me out.

I'm going to beat the gun!" He paused. "You'll keep an eye on Glenn—for a while—eh?"

"I will."

Pizarro had stopped sweating and puffing. His voice was still low; its disordered vehemence had given place to a leveler flow, keener, more vigorous, and still more passionate.

"You may imagine this is all on the spur of the moment, King; a flash in the pan of just now. You're wrong. It isn't. You may have noticed I haven't the same crew I had. Hand-picked, painstakingly. Those fellows last year had families. These haven't. No homes. No ties or tags whatever. As well-off there as here. Maybe better. At a moment's notice, you understand. And the boat's always supposed to be geared and provisioned for its maximum at sea. So you'll begin to comprehend—"

Pizarro stopped short. He flushed. He shook himself down and laughed with a strong flavor of embarrassment.

"King," he said small, "I wonder if we aren't a couple of very damn fools."

He pulled back to the *Chimera* with full, leisurely

strokes. It was remarkable how quickly and wholly he seemed himself again. His fit of nerves had been cathartic—for the moment at any rate. When he reached the yawl, where Glenna was up from her nap and waiting, he kissed her comically on the tip of her nose and rowed her in a genial basso profundo about the lateness of tea, pounding the hollow hatch with his fists like a Congo drum.

Watching him from his seat on the wheel-box, King had a sudden and coherent answer. "So you want to know what's wrong, do you, John Pizarro? Your *brain* may not know; but those fists do. The little fractional nubbin at the very top of the fore-part of your brain-pan, the part you were born a gentleman with and took to school—of the whole living bulk of you from scalp to sole, *that's the only part of the mortal whole of you that doesn't know what's wrong.*"

He ought to have had that with him in the stern-sheets of the confessional dinghy, when Pizarro was in the asking mood. For now the mood had passed.

In the three days left of his fortnight Pizarro didn't bring up the subject again.

Two or three times before he left, King tried to

look steadily at Glenna, as he had looked at John Pizarro. But there was always something about the girl that prevented his looking at her steadily, to any useful end. To his disturbed imagination her pure transparency of youth was the counterfeit transparency of a mirror, and there was nothing on earth just now he wanted less than that.

When he said good-by at the station at the top of the street down which their white shoes would presently be walking without touching the ground, he promised it wouldn't be a month before he was with them again. But for many months there was to be with him a sense of moral incapacity, taking its shape in a physical hebetude. He wasn't to see them till the summer was nearly done. Not till the day in fact that followed upon that afternoon on a northern island when his friends went for a walk in the Hidden Forest, and, coming out, almost stepped on a snake in the grass. . . . The day after the evening when, awaiting Blackstone on the yacht-club float, Glenna rallied her father: "You talk almost as if you were trying to make me believe you had a *past*."

This was John Pizarro's past. . . .

VIII

THE twilight was gone, and it was full night. Phann and Blackstone had left the yawl at seven for an evening in town; toward nine, Glenna, picking up a snack between bathing and changing, was ready to go ashore for the Friday Hop at the yacht club, where they had cards for the week. Pizarro ferried her, still in the clothes in which he had returned from the Hidden Forest. At the float she renewed her plea: "Come, *do* be a sport! *Do* come too!"

He would only grin. "Who's your victim tonight?"

"I've no idea, unless you come. I suppose I can get picked up somehow. There's a lump of Cornell boy. And there's Park. . . . No, but come along with you! Aw, dad! *Aw, Jawn!*"

Clamped to the thwart he continued to grin at her. "*Get* along with you! Give me a rest!"

He grinned at the place where the whiteness of her dance-frock had been as he pulled through the shadowy fleet on his return to the *Chimera*.

An hour afterwards the same grin was there, bitten into the stuff of his face. Crossing their eyes for fun, men sometimes find them fixed so.

Now he seemed the only thing alive on the water. No air was moving; there wasn't so much as a slap of ripples along the moored boats to ruffle the hush of the anchorage, only the small sounds from shore wandering out to die, like voices from another planet—footfalls on piers, trills of dilute laughter, and the continuous faint pulsations of fiddle, drum, and saxophone from the square-mooned rectangle of the club.

The lines of the pucker that was a grin grew finer; Pizarro put his head in his hands, and the hands stopped his ears. But still it seeped through: *dum-dum-dum-dum-dum!* The grunting saxophone. "Why—*did*—*I*—kiss that girl . . ."

What girl?

He jumped up and tramped. All he could manage was four steps this way, four steps back. Beyond that was black water. Black water everywhere.

Dum-dum-dum. . . . "Why, oh, why, oh, why" . . . The reeds coughing, the drum obtruding like

thuds of storm. It penetrated and timed the pumpings of his arteries.

He stood resolutely the other way, his eyes seaward. He gave himself a stint in imagining. He set himself to think of the Pacific Ocean. He had never been on the Pacific. He knew it only through deliberate, intense visualizing stints like this. Its vastness. Its immeasurable and adventurous solitude. Its golden, azure-chambered archipelagoes. . . . From this mooring, boldly for Panama—

No! Be damned, no! Anger. A vestigial revolt. That dope was stale with using. The drug grew weak.

A scrap of song just now from the club pier. A girl's voice. Or was it a woman's? Girl, woman; where's the line that divides them? One has already been, the other is still to be, mind, heart, and body, the prey of the anointed stranger—the fortuitous youngster—some lump of Cornell boy—some "Park." . . .

The orchestra had started again. It was a fox-trot.

It was Pizarro's nerves; a physical matter, he told himself. There used to be a time when he hadn't

any nerves, or at least he had been more than a match for them; now they had tired him out. Driven down the ladder by these nerves he changed his shoes, shook himself into fresh flannels, smoothed his hair, cast off the dinghy, and rowed ashore. He prowled up the pier and around the lawn, hung with Japanese lanterns in criss-cross patterns. The place was populous with chattering people; their confusion was added to his own.

"Now that I've come I might as well go back again. Nothing fatal's going to happen to her *here*."

He drifted indoors. The human tide carried him. Presently, at the edge of the dance-floor, he found himself amongst the shoulders of the stag-line.

How many pretty girls there were, and how few beautiful ones! What a dearth of the real thing! No wonder Glenn was the rage. Where she moved, out there, the center of the whole thronged room moved; there was no denying it; it did.

She was dancing with a good-looking youngster, a blond-headed, blond-brained innocent whom he seemed vaguely to recognize. It must be Park. She was having a good time, and that was what Pizarro wanted her to have.

He took a hand out of his pocket and examined his nails, one after another. He had got to the little finger when he heard her voice.

"Cut in!"

He glanced up to see her before him, her eyes challenging him with gaiety and malice while with one hand she held off Park, who seemed not to know whether to glower or grin at this extraordinary proceeding.

"Cut *in*, you idiot!"

So Pizarro mumbled a "May I?" toward the youth and encircled Glenna with the bidden arm. Immediately, feeling red, he began to upbraid her.

"That wasn't nice of you, Glenn."

"Wasn't it? John *Pizarro*, you're blushing! Is that because I caught you in a lie—about not coming ashore to-night?"

"I didn't come to dance. I didn't feel like—How in the devil can I dance—"

"I can dance with everybody—" It was a third voice, a scrap of a friendly gibe, bright eyes darting between them in a passing whorl of the one-step, a fat white shoulder, faintly freckled, come and gone.

"Who was that, Glenn?"

"That was Mrs. Luskin—met her at the Greys', remember? the day we came."

"Greys? What Greys?"

"Poor darling, poor dear!" She studied him with a hopeless pucker of indulgence between her eyes. "Never mind. All I ask of you is, pick up your feet. You're dancing as if there were some other female you'd really had your eye on . . . Now I wonder. Is *that* why you— Ah, that's better! That's the lamb! John Pizarro, there's no use talking, when you put your mind to it—"

In the crush at the door afterwards Pizarro found himself stalled momentarily beside the fat shoulder and the large, friendly, hopeful eyes of the byplay of three minutes ago. He inclined his head.

"Mrs. Luskin!"

"The old story, is it, Mr. Pizarro? 'I can dance with everybody but my wife . . .' You—*men!*"

"I—I beg your pardon?"

She had a whole way of laughing that shook her flesh in multitudes of local quivers, and the *sotto voce* of an almost-great emotional actress. "All the same, sir, don't try to pretend with *me* that you

don't know what a *peach* she is. And so *girlish!* Why, the men that would give their *right arms*—you lucky *creature!*"

Glenna, just ahead of them, turned an ear. Then an eye of gloating. But Mrs. Luskin shook a hand at her, crying: "For husbands only! Mind your own affairs!"

There's a kind of dream in which you know you're dreaming, yet it doesn't help. It still seems important to run, and still your feet are stuck to the ground. . . .

Pizarro found himself in the open air, walking toward the pier, Glenna beside him. She had his elbow gripped in her two hands and was pumping it up and down to the measure of Mendelssohn's Wedding March, which she hummed with a brazen solemnity: "Isn't-it-too—screaming— Isn't-it-too—*grand*—"

For some reason he felt like shouting: "Hush!"

Noting with a kind of straw-catching relief that the tide of the strollers began to set against them, he tugged at his elbow, saying brusquely: "There's the next dance, now. Skip!" And when, nevertheless, they had arrived somehow at the far end of the pier, he repeated it, "Skip, Glenn!" and added,

"Somebody's probably hunting you everywhere."

"Let 'em."

"Oh, but see here—"

"No, I won't see here, and I won't be lectured. I'm through! I am seriously. And it's your fault; so don't look at me. You've deliberately gone and ruined my taste for the rah-rah—the blah-blah—age. They make me sick, dad; nausey-sick! I can't help it, can I, if I'm happier with words of more than one syllable, and more at home with the age of reason? And, drat you! drat you and double-drat you! John Pizarro, it's all your fault! . . . Yours and King's."

An entirely novel speculation passed across his mind, as, persisting, he unloosed his arm. Like a mental wince. Was he lumped then in the same age with King? A second wince. Why not?

She chanted after him as he moved toward the gang-plank to the floats: "You made—me what—I am—to-day—I hope—you're sat—is-fied. . . ."

Something in the tone of her foolery made him turn his head, and something he saw in her look brought him up. Fire centered in one round spot on either cheek; the rest of her face was cinder-

gray, save for the black of her pupils. Her mask of comedy hung loose.

He tried to be funny. "*Get,* with you! Back to the party, with you! Lord! What's wrong with the child?"

"Well, what *is* wrong with the child?"

He heard her slipper beating a nervous tattoo and saw her hands clenched. Of a sudden she darted past him and down the plank.

"Home, John!" she laughed a rather rickety laugh as she got into the dinghy and planted herself in the stern. And then in another key, with something curiously like a wail beneath it: "I want to go home."

As he pulled away, leaving the lights and the noises of the shore behind, Glenna sat with her chin on her fists, and staring beyond him she began to speak:

"What *is* wrong with me? Who am I, why am I, and why am I here? You don't know, dad; you don't know. . . . Why did I have to be brought into life when life's nothing but corners, knobs, spikes, elbows? What am I to do? Where's to be the end of me? . . . I can't go ashore; I hate it. But I

hate the water too. I hate everything. I hate myself. I hate you. . . ."

Pizarro rowed, his eyes fixed on his fists as they came at him and went away.

By and by the girl's voice resumed. "I don't know what I want. I don't even know I want anything. All I know is I'm a ghastly misfit and a ghastly mess. You won't believe it, but I'm slowly suffocating; can't find air to breathe. . . . If I had any nerve I'd do something mad and wild. . . . You talk about fading into the blue. *You!* Piffle, dad! It's *I* ought to do that. Steal the boat some fine day, all alone, and head out, and sail and sail. Sail with the wind; sail with the gale; sail with the hurricane! . . . But being nothing but a ghastly mess, I suppose I'll just probably start smoking like a chimney one of these times, and drink myself to death, and wind up doping. . . . Funny, isn't it? Laugh, won't you! *It's an utter scream!*"

Suddenly she said: "Hard on your left!—there—way enough!"

Over his shoulder he saw the loom of something like a windowless wall. Dredgers at work in a neighboring basin had left a scow there, anchored at the

channel's edge, a box of a great craft, half laden with pipe, with a box of a tender's-house stuck up on one end. Before he knew what was afoot Glenna was gone from the dinghy, swarming up the side and over the scow's gunwale.

"Frock's ruined, and so are my hands." Her voice, overhead, had undergone another of its mercurial changes. "But it came to me all in a flash—*precisely* what I need—a swim!"

"You crazy! No, but hold on; there's probably some one there."

"Not a soul." She had gone to look. "Nobody home."

"You oughtn't. Glenn, where are you? You oughtn't, honestly. You're all warm—"

"Hush. And listen. My duds will be here by the house. Wait till you hear me dive, then come and get them, and by the time you're halfway home I'll be aboard and abed and snoring."

Pizarro made fast to a ring on the scow's side. He sat down. He sat in the dinghy and stared at his hands. They lay quiet on his knees and he stared at them.

Then something awful happened and he heard it.

. . . Then he wasn't in the boat; somehow or other he was up on the scow. And as he ran, he saw.

"Scat!" he yelled. "Get out!"

The friendly moon-white cat leaped away from Glenna's ankles, hesitated, fawned, incredulous of ill, and only fled to cover under the pipe-piles before a missile of wood. Pizarro picked his daughter up, draping her half-discarded clothing awkwardly about her, and carried her back to the side above the dinghy. She helped a little when it came to getting her down, and that was well, because his own limbs seemed attacked of a curious palsy. It wasn't till they were cast off and yards clear of the hulk, however, that her teeth unlocked and began to chatter.

"That's better," he thought to himself, but when he thought to say it to her, his own teeth were knocking together. He tried to center his attention on his fists again, as they swooped toward him on the oar-butts and receded, but Glenna was beyond them in the starlight, and he lowered his eyes to the grating underfoot. . . .

To-night she broke a silence as old as she was.

"No—wait—" she said, sitting up in a huddle of blankets in her bunk, as, turning off her stateroom

light and telling her she would be all right and to go to sleep, he would have shut her door. "No—leave it a little wh-wh-while."

He felt her eyes dogging him as he puttered about the cabin beyond her door. He didn't know what was going on, but it was her pride caving in.

"Tell me. *Dad,* for God's sake, tell me! Why am I this way?"

"If I knew," he said, "I would."

"You used to say it was something—something hereditary—"

"Because they told me it usually—very often—was."

"But you're not this way . . . Then was my mother—"

"I—Glenn, I don't know."

He did know, and he didn't know. He did know that Glenna Peterson had had no fear of cats, for he had seen her more than once go out of her way to fondle them. And he didn't know why, when he had brought her home a Persian kitten once, as a birthday gift, she had sent it to her mother's house to be kept. It had always been a little of a mys-

tery, a mystery that became of moment only when in later years, after anxious shinnyings around the branches of their several family-trees (shinnyings his daughter never knew of), he had had to come back to that ambiguous episode, turn it over and over in his memory, and shake his helpless head.

"I don't know, Glenn. But you can't depend on those things, you understand; they may skip generations, two or three of them; apt as not. . . . And after all, honey, you do make such a mountain— There! There!"

She had twisted around to lie on her face, and in the dark of her room he heard her beginning to cry. He went in. It seemed to him he would do anything, give anything, suffer anything. . . . He fell down on his knees beside the bunk. "My dearest, my darling!" He put out an arm to enwrap and comfort her. A fumbling hand. It touched her further shoulder; it was bare, and it was still cold. . . . He began to shiver. He got back on his heels. He stood up and shivered and shook.

"Th-there now—there now—it's all—all right now, Glenn."

He walked out into the cabin. He walked to the companion-ladder, climbed it stiff-legged, and stood in the air and the dark.

Blackstone, following the tow-headed Phann, was just climbing in over the rail from the work-dinghy, and having touched his cap he was about to pass on forward when something in his employer's attitude held him up.

"Yes, sir?"

"I didn't say anything, Blackstone."

"Excuse me; excuse me, sir."

"Blackstone, are we short on anything, supposing we were to clear out for a cruise? I mean—a long one."

"Water, sir. And let me see, there would be some things from the grocery—"

"See to it all to-morrow, Blackstone. . . . Good-night."

Pizarro remained motionless until Blackstone had disappeared below; turning then, he began to tramp. Four paces, two paces, four, three, to recommence with four again, the quadrangle prescribed for him by the truncated wedge of the deck.

His hands behind him, shoulders hunched, head

down, almost precisely so (save that then it had been raining) he had tramped the platform at an English train-stop two years and more ago and realized with a curious sort of panic that he and the child that had come back to him that day adult were in a foreign land.

The foreign land wasn't England, even if his top-brain translated it as England out of the gibberish of his nameless, shapeless, and clairvoyant alarm. It wasn't as near as England; it wasn't as near as Tibet, or as the moon, or the star Betelgeuse, that wood where the lost boy (who had been taught not to be afraid of lions) couldn't see the trees for the dark. The dark of the night of chimera, two years, four months, and some days long.

And now the night was trying to lift. Amongst the boles of those oblique and heteromorphic trees, set in a ring around Pizarro's brain, like a beast-pit, the light of no known sun was trying to penetrate. It was trying to rush him. *Had* been, for hours. . . .

The hour in the Hidden Forest where "they weren't they."

The serpent. . . .

" 'I can dance with everybody but my wife. . . .' "

The weight in his arms, all the way across the scow, of Glenna the woman, white, defenseless, and disheveled. . . .

The colliding of his hand with her shoulder, still cold. . . .

As he tramped, as he continued to charge around and around, endlessly, Pizarro's feet felt heavy and his head was light. Like a balloon dragging its anchor around and around.

Once the anchor caught on something and brought him to a halt, staring down into the water.

Ablution . . . Oblivion . . . Healing . . . Peace . . .

As he gazed into it, it became, not eight or ten feet, but a million light-years deep to the stars drowned in its pellucid gulf. To its magnanimous pull there was added a push from behind him, the weight of the hands of all his importunate honorable ancestors. . . .

The ray of light from the cabin companionway fell across his feet. He turned away from the water, pulled the hatch to, and closed the doors. Then, shut out on deck, he resumed his tramping.

He set himself a stint in imagining. Locking the teeth of his will he set himself to resurrect and re-

people a room. A long room, high-peaked, rough-plastered, brown-paneled. A commodious chimney. An oval dining-table, objects blue and silver laid on its whiteness. In this way, in his desperation, he undertook to cram himself back into the holy and inviolate haven of fatherhood, passionately dramatizing memory.

He began to enunciate words, sentences, under his breath.

"Well, and how's the old woman to-night? . . ."

"What? No more of your cereal? Not a spoonful? Well, that proves one thing to *me;* that proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that you're very sorry your daddy has come home, all miraculously safe and sound. So! . . ."

"No, personally, my dear Miss Pizarro, I hate and despicate plum-pudding and rum-stuff. But simply because I'm grown up, the policeman will come if I don't down-with-it-and-no-squealing. . . ."

"What? Quite right. But no need calling Annie: dad will take you. . . . Up we climb and off we go to the tidy-room. . . ."

"Do you know, sir, for instance, what this old

woman was trying to tell me this evening, King? . . . I'll give you three—"

King! The room was down in its own dust. And here was Pizarro on the deck of the *Chimera,* stock-still. *King!*

To-morrow King was coming.

A hotness ran over him. He had a panicky impulse to run and hide himself before the face of omniscience walking in the garden.

He went and sat down on the cabin-top and set himself to think of the Pacific Ocean. . . .

IX

It was always splendid, having King with them. Especially of late he seemed to quicken them and free them in a dozen ways by the simple act of sitting there, a bulk at rest. Perhaps it was because, a life-long bachelor, his forces of sympathy were still in a manner virgin. Or perhaps it was because he was in truth half a renegade; the veils of their steadily shrinking world hadn't forced him; where he stood immovable he had kept a bulge, then a rent, a one last avenue of communication with the outside. So he did this for them when he came to them; no sooner had he made the two three, than he had made them two thousand millions, aware at one stroke of his presence of the fact that there were others besides them alive on earth.

For Glenna, especially, his visits were in the nature of holidays. Without knowing or caring why, she felt "let out to play." For all her wail that she was more at home in his generation (which in a sense she was), yet once he was there in sight she

was straightway more nearly her own age again, irrepressible and irresponsible, let loose in the china-shop of ideas, fantasies, thrills, and furores, delectably idiotic, "wild to go!"

It was so to-day. Cornering King in one of the wicker chairs, by the simple expedient of roosting on his knees she recovered her long-leggedness. One arm clamped around his neck, with the other hand she plagued him, making free of his cravat, his watch, or simply weaving the air with gestures of luminous foolery.

"Why do you hate and loathe and detest us so, King darlint; so you never come near us any more? Henry, my heart and soul, look Glenn in the eye! Is it—*can* it be—a brand-new blonde stenographer? Oh, Henry King, for shame!"

For Pizarro, hugging his knees on the cabin-top and watching them, from a grinning distance, it was different to-day. He too had a sense of liberation, but it wasn't of a kind he had ever known before. It was as though he had been given a momentary reprieve at the rope's end. As if, from the rising to the setting of this sun he had been allowed to "keep his fingers crossed."

There had been an act of decision to start with. When, in the dusk before dawn, Blackstone had awakened him from his curled-up nap of exhaustion on the house, he had knuckled his eyes, gazed around him in a queer fashion, and said: "You'll see about all gear and stores to-day, Blackstone. To-morrow we shall be leaving on a more or less indefinite cruise. Miss Glenn will not go." Then he had descended to the cabin, all his actions clear as the morning ray, and written half a dozen necessary letters directing the movement of his funds (King's coming was a godsend there); and when he had sealed the last of them, presto! it was as if some monstrous loom of a teacher had said: "Ten minutes for recess now."

A remarkable thing had happened to time. For once it was sundered into three parts, complete and unrelated, yesterday, to-morrow, and to-day. To-day was the recess.

It was more than recess; it was like a sharply delimited amnesia in which, recollection, anticipation, conscience, and all spiritual functions suspended for certain hours, he had been given, along with the freedom of the present, a magnification of

faculties, a heightened power of purely surface perception, so that when he looked at the water he saw it vividly alive, he sensed the actinic surf of light-waves, felt the dynamic pressure of the slightest flaw of wind. Boats were passing out; their sails, long grown familiar, were reseen for the first time, shapes of beauty spread to the air; swiftness and power incarnate in gossamer. Among the boats still moored, there were people suddenly possessed of faces, names too, probably: there were more on shore; the steamer-dock was colored with them; he was aware of them in their myriad complex identities.

He laughed out loud, for no apparent reason. He unhugged his knees and wiggled his pinched fingers, and when the others glared at him from their crowded chair he denounced them.

"Not a word of sense so far between you two! Nothing to make me a better or a wiser man."

"Hark to him, King! Luxuries! Always luxuries! . . . No, don't look at him; look at me. Your chin is slightly smudged and you haven't answered my question—about taking me to the dance tonight."

"Dance!" Pizarro threw back his head and made his neck crack. "I'd give a dollar to see him. That hippopotamus!"

"You would, eh!" Glenna did him a delightful bristle.

"You would!" King thrust out a crag of a jaw.

"What I mean is—" Pizarro let his feet over the edge and stood down on them. "What I mean; it's teatime, and should we make it cocktails? In other words, let's commit something wild."

"Wild? Did I understand 'wild'? . . . Can he think of anything wilder, King, than my making public love to the world's—let me see—second-most-notorious architect—to say nothing of its champion snake-charmer? . . . Which reminds me, King darlint, speaking of snakes—"

King disimprisoned his neck of a sudden, puffing and purpling. "Uh—wild—eh?" He fixed his eyes on Pizarro and sank into mock gloom. "So, John, you call *that* wildness, do you; a couple of cocktails in the afternoon? Is *that* your idea of a—a—a cosmic adventure? Bitterly I protest, you give me a pain. You fellows' idea of something-to-do romantic! Damn my eternal eyes, Johnnie, now if *I* were an

idle rich, with a palatial seagoing yacht under me, and somebody to look out for my family, and the Spanish Main and the Ivory Coast and all the Cannibal Islands simply begging me—"

His sense of the possibilities grew too much for words, and this was as long rehearsed and carefully calculated as the rest of his amiable ferocity. Apparently oblivious to the fact that his silence was of a sudden the silence of three, his wrinkles still carrying on the illusion of play, he turned to Glenna. "Glenn, tell me: how would you like to be *my* girl for a spell? Eh?"

Something had happened. Her arm still lay across his shoulders, but it lay inert, and her eyes were fixed on the deck. Then when she laughed, presently, it wasn't quite a clear laugh, and her funniness had a note of strain.

"It all depends on what you mean by 'girl,' my love. Do you mean 'little girl,' or do you mean 'best girl'?"

The sunlight of a moment ago had lost its warmth; the colors of things had grown hard; sounds were deadened. King's instinct was to "ease up a bit."

Passing a hand over his face he mopped it clean of everything but innocence.

"Well, why don't we go? What's the matter with those cocktails, Johnnie—all talk? . . . Cheer up, Glenn, the worst is yet to come. I'm going to take you to a dance *and dance with you*. . . . But can't I blow us to a joy-ride first? Motion! Isn't there anywhere we can charter a long, low, powerful horseless-carriage? Isn't there any place to go see on this God-forsaken island—didn't I hear somebody on the boat to-day saying something about woods—Haunted Woods—Deserted Forest—whatever it is?"

Landing plump in the middle of another silence he was himself a little mystified. In his elephantine gambolings he had somehow managed to "put his foot in it." Intuition told him that much, but nothing more. He wanted pulling out. Again it was Glenna that made the effort. With a catch that was nearly a giggle she shook herself free.

"Why, of course, stupid; the *Hidden* Forest. It's gorgeously spooky! A perfect dream of a spot. Come, we absolutely must go. . . . Although—yes, well, that's so much the better—we'll have to leave

your friend, Mr. Pizarro, behind. You see there are snakes there—honestly serpents—and it seems your friend John is petrified of snakes—hideously! He's not like us, my dear. Oh, he doesn't belong to our family group at all, at all. . . . *Henry King, wake up!"*

Glenna didn't know it; King didn't understand it, it had happened nowhere but in John Pizarro's mind. But in John Pizarro's mind (a queer instrument today), preposterous, fantastic, ridiculous as it was, out of that fabric of halcyon play, it had at least begun to happen.

It was a thing as far-fetched as this. It was as if one were asked to believe that a stray syllable from one planet might collide in the depths of the empyrean with a syllable lost from another, and discover that they made a word. To believe that a snake's tail in the dust might scrawl by utter accident a second. That the two, falling across each other by a billionth chance in the cellar of a man's brain, might take the shape of an hypothesis.

Pizarro sat down on the edge of the house. The first thing he noticed about himself was that sweat was starting from his skin, so many needle-jets. He

rested his head in his hands. Parting the fingers slightly he looked between them. He looked at Henry King and Glenna Pizarro for the first time in his life.

He shut his hand again. He shut his eyes. Squeezed the lids.

He felt himself being pushed over the precipice of laughter. Hyena laughter. Guffaws.

Crazy damned fool! Giddy damned fool!

To save him he couldn't keep his fingers clamped or his eyes closed.

With this second appraisal his mind began to defend itself with anger. If the devil of chance had to choose a time for a fool optical illusion, why couldn't he have chosen another day than this, when Pizarro was all off-balance anyhow? But to have waited till this queer hiatus-hour to trick those two heads together in the pink peep-hole of an observer's fingers, those two faces on a level, those four gray eyes on a line! To have put the sun where it was, to shine in under the awning on them, searching out the last plane, measuring the last angle of cheek and chin with its hypocritically rational ray! *When it was all nothing but nothing!*

"What's the deep thought, dad?"

"If we can't do cocktails, Johnnie, could we do a cup of coffee or something?"

Pizarro got to his feet and went below. Ducking into his stateroom he leaned there for a minute before his looking-glass. He ran on to the galley and began to rummage for oranges. It was the sound of him laughing to himself that brought the others down.

"I've just thought of a good one," he explained. "When is a door not a door? No, now; wait. It's deep, that one."

King and Glenna traded glances, wagging dubious heads.

"I repeat: when is a door not a door? That's simple. Give it up? . . . Well, then, when a man that's thinking of canary-birds happens to look at it. Then it's a canary-bird. See that?"

Glenna came and smoothed his hair. King said: "When you've got that drink together, have one. . . ."

Pizarro had more than one.

"We don't get hold of you every day, King, old man!"

He kept things going. He surprised all three of them by being the life of the impromptu party. He talked. He acted up.

"Let's be as wild as Indians this time. Let's get out the reserves. Let's *really* rock the boat."

Taking himself literally he began to rush from one side of the deck to the other.

"Dad, stop it! You'll make King seasick!"

In the profound quietude of the end of day, mirrored and remirrored between the water and the greening sky, he magnified his efforts and created the mock of a storm, rolling the big yawl, sending wider and wider ripples to break among the little boats around.

"God save us! What a night at sea!"

They tackled him finally and pinned him amidships, calling him a pie-eyed idiot and a crazy loon. In the tone of their horseplay, however, there was something uncomfortable, a tenth embarrassed, as will happen sometimes when the beloved child, applauded too far, begins to lose his drollness and turn just silly.

It had no effect. If Pizarro caught either of the two studying him with oblique concern, not by any

sign did he show it. He who was by nature the most sensitive of fellows seemed for some inscrutable reason to have clapped on the wadded headgear of the penny buffoon, impervious.

Though neither of them consented to think it, there was something not entirely unlike relief when, later in the evening, to their invitation to come along with them to the dance, he said no. They insisted, naturally. He wagged a head at them, shook his fists at them, stamped his feet. "Me a gooseberry? *Me?*" They argued. He charged them, drove them into their boat, pushed it off. "Get along! I'm done with you!"

He seemed done with a lot. He walked around to the other side of the house and sat down. A lethargy as complete and as specious as his vivacity had laid hold of him; specious in that, although for long stretches of time he remained immobile, not one of the muscles in his body eased its pull, and all his bones stayed braced.

From time to time he appeared to make an effort to escape the strait-jacket of his nerves. Mutterings rolled around in his mouth. "Fiddlesticks! . . . Fudge!" Epithets calculatingly petty, as

though instinct told him that if the sound of sheer schoolgirl asininity wouldn't shame him out of it, nothing would.

And even asininity seemed to fail.

Once only did he shake off the cast of immobility, and then for but a moment. An involuntary start-up. Like one jumping from a dream of a snake around his wrist. Or around his neck. . . . He put a hand to his throat to swallow.

"What piffle! What tush! Ah, but you should have been a dime detective, Johnnie. Keen fellow like you!"

A breeze had arisen. Little by little his attention found itself centering on this movement of air from the sea. Presently, turning his head on his rusty neck, he followed with his eyes the line of it, shown by the sensitive vane of the anchored yawl. Not yet clearly knowing why, he marked with a quickening mind the positions of the little boats astern, moored between him and the channel's edge.

There was a sound of oarlocks. Jumping up, Pizarro stirred about. It was only the crew returning.

"Blackstone."

"Sir?"

"Listen, Blackstone—" Then Pizarro swallowed the obstruction in his throat. He wet his lips. "Blackstone, there's no need of your coming off to-night—this last night—you and Phann. That is to say, I'd rather in fact you wouldn't. If you can find a room ashore for the night I'll foot the bill. . . . To-morrow morning then. . . . Good night. . . ."

The dancers returned a little after eleven. They said they had had a grand time, but beside the evidence of the hour and of the music still coming down faintly from the hotel on top of the hill, there ran under their protests a note of the oppression they had not been able to shake off.

Pizarro was penitent. "Was it my fault—acting like a sailor on a souse—before you went?"

"Heavens, what an idea! Silly! No!"

Glenna said good night and went below.

"Why don't you finish it?" asked Pizarro, as King contemplated throwing his cigar away. He moved aft and stood with his elbow propped against the mizzenmast. "King," he said, "think Glenn seems well?"

"Good Lord! Yes. Why not?"

"It's this cat-business, King. It takes her so hard, and she persists in making such a hell for herself about it. Had a go of it last night again. . . . Know anything about it, King?"

"Not much. No more than you do. Lots of people have it, I'm told, more or less. I suppose there must be some theory—"

"Is it a thing one inherits? Or rather, what I mean to say, would it be reasonable to suppose one could pick up that sort of a quirk any way *but* by inheritance?"

"I'd never thought, John."

"I have. I've thought till my head ached. I've gone over our families with a fine-tooth comb—I tell you it's worried me—if somewhere I could find one outcrop—one—well—one justification."

"Hey, stop it! Pull up, John! You talk about Glenn's making a mountain of it; what do you call what you're doing? Man, after all, it's so next to nothing. . . . John, listen to me. When are you going to light out on that pirate trip of yours? Say!"

"To-morrow."

"You mean—"

Pizarro flung away from the mast. "I'd have been gone to-day, King, if you hadn't been coming."

"Then — actually — to-morrow — so help you God—"

"Who knows?"

The unwonted strain of double-dealing began to tell on Pizarro, making him fidget and snap. In the starlight his face looked drawn.

King's face looked a little drawn too, the folds between his brows deepening. "You *do* need a change of scene." He threw a sudden arm around his friend's shoulders. "Go on, do it! Go to-morrow, son. Leave—everything about Glenn—to me. Eh?"

"Who knows? Who knows?"

As they passed down out of sight in the cabin-companion Pizarro turned his head for one last look at the wind. . . .

X

THE wind had increased at three o'clock and a fragmentary moon stood two hours high. The round beam of it through a porthole showed King that his white assailant was only Pizarro in pajamas.

"Wake up, King! Turn out in a hurry, will you, and give me a hand." He trailed the rest of it over his shoulder as they made their chill way abovedecks: "The men haven't come aboard, and the anchor's dragging on us. Look at it, by damn! Letting us right down on top of this big devil—can you beat it! Whew!"

Almost in contact with the yawl's careening taffrail, and overshadowing it, rode the pipe-scow's bowside, looking as solid as any brick wall on ground. There was going to be some damage when the two touched, and it wasn't the scow that would suffer. Already, invisible under the counter, the nipped dinghy creaked; luckily it had been taken on oblique planes, and at another down-swoop of the stern it

came shooting out on the port side, free at its painter's end.

It was understandable that King, landlubber, and half asleep in the bargain, should not know what to do. Pizarro's witlessness hadn't the same excuse. The thing that seemed to hobble his feet and his brain was the appalling element of time. He didn't have *time*. He dashed here, darted there. He started for the bows and then hesitated. He squeezed his temples between his thumbs. "What am I thinking of?" He skittered around, bent double. "Where's that boat-hook? Damn Blackstone anyhow! Get busy, King; find that *boat-hook!*"

"Where is it?" King still rubbed his eyes.

"Where *is* it! Great God, man!" Pizarro rushed him, waving striped arms. "No time! Look here! She's going to bang. Listen!" He laid hands on King, overweening, bustling. "Up you go, King! Go on, I'll give you a foot-up. Shinny aboard that devil now—there must be a plank—pipe—something—anything to fend me off! Git!"

Groaning, blowing, dominated by the other's moral and muscular manhandlings, King heaved his bulk over the rampart of the scow and began to cast

about, rolling his eyes and swearing. Pizarro turned and ran for the bows of his yawl and the bit there. Casting off the hitches of the anchor-rode with a heart-in-the-mouth celerity he braced his bare feet and began to haul it home. Inch by inch at first, then foot by foot, it came out of the water, warping the precious craft ahead and clear. Somewhere in a crevice of his brain the thought lodged, dubious, and ironical at once: "What are the odds he'll stop to wonder why, now that the strain on it's doubled, the anchor's decided at last to hold?" He stuck to his work, pretending not to hear the deep-throated plaint lifting down the wind: "Hey! *Hey!* You're moving *off!* How'm I going to get back on board, you idiot?" Only when, the anchor hove precariously short, a good twenty yards of water had been opened between the scow and the yawl's stern, did he seem to get his ears back. Making the line fast he came aft and discovered his helper's plight.

"Oh, yes," he called. "I'd forgotten you, King. Keep your nighty on and I'll come get you."

"It's d-d-damnation cold! D-don't hurry!"

"Who made this knot fast?"

It was all the knot's fault. Shivering with more

than the cold, Pizarro was having a hard go in pantomime with the dinghy's tether. He fussed and swore, both cheerfully. His air, at a distance, was one of light-hearted exasperation; actually, at nearer view, his face was modeled in curious bumps and hollows. His eyes were not on the knot he fumbled, from under their lids they were fixed on the moonlit shape of the marooned man.

"For the l-love of P-Pete!" came the imprecation. "Cut it!"

"All clear now!" Pizarro's hail was full of cheer, but his fingers in the loosening tangle begrudged their success. The idea of losing the painter overboard occurred to him, and passed. Still "soldiering," killing all the time he could, he pulled the dinghy alongside, lowered himself into it and put the oars out Latin-fashion, facing ahead, his eyes still keeping track of the scow and its pale, protesting prisoner.

"What next?" He saw himself caught in his own trap; he found himself at a thorough loss and momentarily wilder. "What do I do now?"

Then midway of the passage, he took in an extra breath, shipped his oars, and pointed.

"Well, what do you know!" His voice sounded reedy in his own ears. "You've got company, after all, King. Look who's with you. There!"

The scow's denizen had appeared at last. King glanced around as directed, mystified.

Pizarro was no longer even pretending to row, and with that extra breath he had stopped breathing.

And all to what purpose? he might have asked himself. If he imagined he detected a start as his friend's eyes encompassed the enormous, fawning, milk-white cat beside him, it might have been only that he imagined it, after all.

"Pretty pussy!" he mooned from above his idle oars, swept down on the scow all the while by the tide and wind. "Handsome kitty, isn't she, King?"

He became aware that King's eyes, removed from the cat, were fixed on his. In them, in the tricky fluid of the night light, there was an expression Pizarro would have given the hope of life to have been able to estimate. Surprise? Suspicion? Perturbation? Panic? Rage? What?

No. Even the man's voice, when he spoke, gave nothing to go on. Its only quality was that it had no quality, no color, no emphasis.

"Why—yes—John—it's a very handsome cat."

With that, neither more nor less than deliberately, King turned, bent over, and agreeing "Nice kitty—nice old thing," ran his palm along the arching back. "I've got to go now, though. Good-by!"

He got down into the dinghy's stern-sheets, propped his chill knees together, and folded his arms.

Facing him now from the forward thwart, Pizarro rowed. It was harder rowing, against the wind, but he scarcely knew it; the oars came, feathered, and went, as of themselves. It was precisely as if he had taken a long strong run to leap a chasm, and finding no chasm there to leap had just gone slack and blank. In this supine state he felt the flitting and counter-flitting of emotions within him, contradictory and mutually mocking. "The devil! . . . Thank God!"

But what about this silence? This silence that seemed to fill up the hollow of the boat between his feet and King's, between their knees, their shoulders, their eyes, their very minds. This sense of something suddenly stagnant; something opaque.

Moved by shame and penitence, Pizarro tried to break through. But he couldn't. And like a man

visible but beyond contact behind a bastion of pearly glass, King sat there and hugged himself, his mouth a straight crease, his eyes, slightly crossed with the focus, fixed steadfastly on his knees. He was beginning to have a queer look about him too; he looked green.

Pizarro shipped his oars, arose, and caught the sideladder of the yawl.

"Here we are, King!" Because he was puzzled, and self-conscious about it, his words sounded clipped-off. "Come; you'd better have a shot of rye."

Feeling no motion he glanced around. King was staring at him, his eyes still crossed a little, fascinated, helpless, horrified. He wanted to kill Pizarro, and his limbs were paralyzed and he couldn't; that was the look. His mouth was open, like a pout. Like a hiccough momentarily arrested, but inevitable. And now he was unmistakably green. . . . And now, as Pizarro watched, the vertigo the man had been fighting triumphed. Hunching himself over the far gunwale, holding on with hands of misery, he heaved. He heaved and he gagged. And he was suddenly sick.

Pizarro sat down on the thwart.

Attending to himself, livid and shaking and foul, King brought his face around.

"So, John! It *was* all a frame-up?"

"King! Was it the cat?"

"You know it was the cat."

"Then it's true?"

In King's eyes there was no murder now. There was pain; a mortal sort of pain, seen through tears. A horrid grief.

"John, I'd have given my life—life, *hell!* I'd have been burned—crucified—rather than have this happen. Your having to know."

"That she's your child? Glenn? Your daughter, not mine?"

"What?" . . . It hadn't the volume of a whisper, but both men heard it in the air above their heads, at the *Chimera's* rail, where Glenna had come on deck.

XI

They had to have something to do, so they dressed.

It wasn't the hour for dressing, since it was still deep in the night. But what are night and day? They are habits of action, ruts of thought. That's all.

When Pizarro had shaved and dressed himself throughout in fresh linen, he returned to the deck and sat in the wicker chair. His eyelids felt dry, as if for want, not of a night's, but of a week's sleep. Clock-hours mean nothing; it is what happens that measures time. Yet, with that exception of the eyelids, he wasn't sleepy. He was wider awake than he had ever been in his life. He felt cleanly severed from the drug of flesh.

His brain, volatilized, subserved the laws of gases, taking immediately and without effort the shape and size of the container offered by the passing instant. Immensely rarefied, it filled up and assumed the contours of the terrestrial night, noted as if introspectively the weather, the southing and softening wind, the fuzzing of the edges of the moon with the

indrift of rising humidity, the splash of a waking gull, the horning, high up, of vanguard geese, and reflected: "Early winter this year."

With a swift docility then it suffered compression and shaped itself to a straiter thought. He thought of his twenty-year-dead wife. This probably hurt. It hurts a man to have his vitals slit open and reorganized, even under ether; the shock is perhaps quite as profound as if he were aware of it. But Pizarro wasn't aware of it. So he could think of his wife calmly, with the dispassion of anesthesia. Yes, he was more than normally calm; his hand was as steady as a surgeon's; he could lift a part out of the viscera of his memory—the part that was his memory of his wife—hold it up, turn it over, and say to himself: "This isn't what I've been thinking it was. Being rational, I accept it now for what it *is*. Not only now, but in retrospect. Everywhere that it has touched my existence, right back through the years, I see its contacts and ramifications as things that fooled me; but now that my eyes are open they can't fool me any more. And that's that. The earth will continue to revolve. . . ."

He was able to go on from that, without wincing:

"Glenna, the woman I married, was seduced, not by Henry King, but by me; that is to say, by my youth, my theatrical verve, my sheer luck. Marrying me, it is plain now, she married into exile. Voluntarily, yes; but all the same unwittingly. Unwitting perhaps to the very end, which came fortunately so soon. By her years, by all the habits of her life, she belonged in another half-generation. And by the accident of a moment of amatory weakness she succeeded in making amends (in a dispassionate bio-chronological sense) for her renegade adventure with the alien, who was myself. . . ." All this, to his brain unwarped by emotion, was as plain as plane geometry.

Now that he was at it, he canvassed his other fetishes. He hunted out illusions, that none should escape. He took one up in his rubber-gloved fingers, pinched it, and saw it vanish. This was his visual memory of his wife. Actually he didn't remember her at all. He couldn't for his life have reconstructed her in the workshop of his imagination. He hadn't been able to, probably, for nearer two decades than one. And the earth had continued to revolve. . . .

Re-rarefied, enormously, his intelligence ran back to the boundaries of the night and observed that one boundary was changing hue; undergoing a widespread and scarcely discernible dilution. Another hour and it would begin to be morning. . . .

Re-condensed, it tackled the question of Henry King.

But King had arrived on deck, shaved, shined, brushed, immaculate. He sat on the wheel-box. Between the two old friends words passed from time to time, desultory, clear, partaking of the clear serenity of this hour of the evening of night, and yet, when one listened to them, preposterous. The most astounding hodgepodge.

"We'll have rain this week. You watch."

"That boat's out early. . . . Fisherman, though, I suppose."

"I suppose so. . . . I suppose, by the book, King, I shouldn't be sitting here. I should be down loading my revolver, to shoot you."

"I suppose, by the book, I should be afraid you would be."

"The moon's getting a ring around it. It wasn't there ten minutes ago."

"It's growing red out there. 'Red in the morning—' "

"How did it happen, King?"

"You remember, when little Glenn was coming, how you and Glenna 'couldn't understand it.' . . . It was the two weeks you were away in September . . ."

"On second thought, King, I guess I prefer you shouldn't tell me. . . . Hello! More geese up there. Early fall."

"The fatal mistake was before you ever came on the scene, John. I shouldn't have been so scared of words, and of life. Or so lazy about them, maybe. I should have *made* Glenna marry me."

"This has knocked me."

"It's knocked me—down!"

Glenna had come on deck.

The girl's first reaction, following on that incredulous, almost bodiless breath of a *"What!"* over the yawl's side, had been panic; the first pure fright of her life. The tongue-tied fright of a child at the sack of a city in revolution is the only thing to be compared with it. For she saw the walls of her life in peril of their own defenders.

All she could manage was a gesture. When the two men came up out of the dinghy she slid between them and took an arm of each, and for a moment all she did was grip, all her forces centered in her blue fingers, making of herself a living vinculum, a flesh cord to be hacked at but not hacked through, battered but never broken. . . . That act, and then a few words, just as instinctive and just as fearfully simple: "Boys! Oh, boys! Here we are, the three of us. I love you and you love me. . . . I love *you,* and you love me. . . . You love him, and he loves you. . . . You love *him* and he loves you. . . ."

After that, as there was nothing more to be said, and as all her strength was gone, she had to "let it go at that" and do as they did for a little while. In the rush of it there came the moment when each had to be alone, to look at it.

Under the common compulsion she too had taken especial pains with her toilette. She had even had a plunge off the forward end of the boat; one deep, cold, white dive under the blue-black water. Lingering before her mirror with inattentive eyes she had brushed her hair and brushed and brushed it with a kind of somnambulist patience, till it took flame be-

neath its undulating surfaces and ran with lights like fires creeping in the mat of autumnal woods.

Now she was in white, the creamy white of woolens and the cooler white of duck and suède, but all turned cool in the thin illumination sliding up over the world, and somehow unsubstantial, beyond any reach.

They didn't know it, but she couldn't help this. Her attitude of separation was of no will of her own. She simply remained where the impetus of her entrance upon the stage of the deck had left her, half standing, half seated on the edge of the house beside the companionway, her face turned in profile, at once averted in pure youth and austerely, almost coldly, self-possessed. Her attention fixed upon the ribbon of pink and heliotrope belting the sea-horizon to the east, she neither gave to the conversation nor did she seem to take from it.

Pizarro might have known, had he turned his memory back to that day of her arrival in England. That day, it is true, she had worn half a smile on the mask that covered her struggle not to shriek out from sheer suspense; on the other hand, what was that day to this?

She was separate from the conversation, as has been said, but by her very presence she shaped it powerfully. Seeing her there now, the others saw themselves diminished; for the parlous moment she was everything. Like boys, who, squabbling over stolen matches, discover that father's barn has been set on fire, they had the impulse to go on tiptoe, their hearts in their mouths and their fingers crossed. At all costs Glenna had to be looked out for, and the first gesture of that in people not yet altogether in their right wits is to bury the ostrich-head in sand.

Silence wouldn't do, though. Staring at the weather wouldn't minimize the event.

"Those clouds in the south seem to be breaking away, after all."

"What was the weather in yesterday's paper, John? I didn't notice."

"Neither did I. Before long I'll duck below and have a look at the glass. I—"

No, it wouldn't do. Lighting matches in the Cave of Winds. Bailing the sea with dippers to hold back the tide. . . .

"John, what's the answer? Oh, *damn* it, John! what's what?"

Pizarro jumped up as though tossed by a spring. "*What's* what?"

"Are you going away?"

"Am I going away?" Pizarro ran his fingers through his hair, standing it all up in shocks. Then King was on his feet.

"Or am I? What I mean, John—what I'm trying to say—"

They confronted each other, their faces all let go of a sudden and haggard, their thoughts released by the release of their muscles. They had to decide. They had to tackle this. Neither of them was going to die right away.

It was funny; they were old friends. They were like brothers.

In the waxing light, simultaneously and (being equally addled) with equal awkwardness, they extended their right hands. It was unfortunate the gesture was so fumbling. The act miscarried. Colliding by a fraction of an inch wrong, as if abashed by the show they had made of themselves the hands fell down again of their own dead weights.

It was a trifle. Inside Pizarro, however, its repercussion was instantaneous, unexpected, and violent.

As if the tumbling down of that fatuous hand of his had pulled a curtain with it, he saw of a sudden, if for no more than a wink, "by the book."

As there is no mammal that has not been, in its own flesh, fish, amphibian, reptile, and bird, so there is no man that is not all man in turn; the difference in individuals is the difference in the order and proportional duration of the turns.

Now, seeing "by the book," Pizarro saw the face before him as the ugly face of the betrayer of his honor, his friendship, and his home. Now, at last, it hurt. The mists of anesthesia failing, he felt the stab of the wound. . . . His marriage. . . . His simpleton happiness. . . . His pride in the memory of it that, like the touch of earth, had armored him and made him invincible. . . . The dupe! The greenhorn! . . . Laughing-stock!

A murderous hate swept him.

From beginning to end it was only a fractional instant. His hand went out, but again it was a fumbling gesture. The fingers aimed at King's windpipe were badly aimed; again they missed. Going nerveless immediately they slithered down the declivity of the collar and came to rest on the shoul-

der. And that was the end of that. By so much, caught in distraction, did he bend the instinctive knee to prunes and prisms, and by no more. And then the hand gave the shoulder it lay on a grip.

"Whether it's you or me goes—I don't see what we've got to say about it, King. That's up to her, isn't it?"

They turned toward the house. But Glenna was gone. While they were so intent upon themselves about her she had taken the dinghy quietly, and they saw her now halfway to the shore, visible one moment, gone behind a shining hull, and come again in an open space, the white figure and the deliberately diminishing black boat as sharp-edged as a toy in the glassy light.

She had not only left them, but she had left them marooned. There was almost an ironic humor in Pizarro's hollow feeling when he discerned how righter than any calculation he had been with his "That's up to her." Even had the other boat been there he saw King and himself powerless to follow her or to interfere by a finger's weight with that quiet act of secession. While they had been pawing each other about like a couple of half-paralytics,

half blind with their own emotions, it seemed Glenna had done the only thing the new order can do with the bungling old, taken what loss there was and washed her hands of its messes.

That sense of his helplessness remained in Pizarro and grew with the hours of a forenoon memorable for its blankness, its sitting and waiting for God-knew-what to happen, its prowling and waiting, its clock-hands glued for interminable stretches, then discovered to have done an hour in a wink, its restive consciousness of Phann and Blackstone always in a corner of sight, innocently and quizzically waiting too for something to happen, their gear, their stores, and their immortal souls made ready for their owner's "more or less indefinite cruise."

King sat more and prowled less than he. And this seeming cold blood of the older man's (this refusal to be stampeded) filled Pizarro with an uneasy wonder and an instinctive protest. When, searching the water-front through his binoculars (this was at eleven) Pizarro lowered them of a sudden, and after a moment of hesitation said: "What do you know about that! She's playing tennis!" the architect would do no more than purse his lips

and nod and look as though he understood the thing. And when at lunch-time (Phann brought them a lunch on deck, and having nothing else to do they devoured it, like menagerie beasts in their cage out there in the center of the big bright circus-tent of the world)—even when, so occupied, they had to sit and watch the truant sail out past them, well astern, in Park's racing-cat, tiller and sheet in hand, her eyes intent upon the canvas and her ears upon whatever the blond boy's "line" might be—even then, and even when, canting away, small and smaller, till it was no more than a feather tipped at an angle with all the other feathers up the harbor, the boat's identity was lost (by one lapse of the watcher's attention) beyond recall—even then all King would say was: "Darn good for her."

Everything in Pizarro pushed him on to ask: "Do you think she'll come back?" But something in him, knowing how unfathomably silly it would sound, kept his mouth shut. And presently King, a solemn cigar lighted and his elbows among the dishes on the folding table, "cleared his throat" by reëchoing his own last words. "Darn good for her. . . . Darn good for us all."

The younger turned and met the older man's full gaze.

"Yes," King said. "The whole thing. And by that I mean, John, from last night till now."

He spoke in a deliberate way, confident that the resolution he had been scraping together for hours against this moment was adequate to see him through.

"To begin with, John, you know that I know that nothing I have, my life, my hope of any heaven you may name, and nothing I could do or suffer, any sacrifice, degradation, torture—would in any fashion square any hundredth part of what I owe you—the —the bill of damages. You know that I'm aware of that, don't you, son?"

His eyes still on the level with the architect's, Pizarro nodded thoughtfully. He realized it as an odd and in some way reprehensible thing, that he was having trouble in fixing his mind on what King was talking about. The one present question, big with proximity and heavy with life, seemed to have crowded out the distant, the dead, and the answered. Even more cleanly than on yesterday, time was chopped in three; the past, the future, and the

enormous moment of now. . . . When he had nodded several times he said: "About her, King. Is she going to—take it? Going to carry on, all right? What's worrying me—"

"What's worrying you?"

"Is she going to—you know what I mean—come back?"

King didn't reply. Noting how Pizarro's attention slipped from him and away toward the upper harbor he relighted his cigar, took two or three introductory puffs, and recommenced.

"Leaving the unpaid and unpayable damages out of it for the moment, John: you'll remember I said this morning I was sorry it had had to happen—the revelation. Now the truth of it is, I'm not sorry. I'm glad."

Again Pizarro nodded, his eyes abroad. "It must have been hell, King. It's hell to know something the others don't know. And all this while—"

"It's not that I mean. I could pay that, John; I was quite willing to." King held there: his face reddened by a shade. "John, look at me, will you!" If there was spleen in it, it was the spleen of the conscientious teacher whose pupil's mind *will* wander

at the fatal instant of knowledge. "No," he repeated when Pizarro had obeyed, a little red on his own account. "It's not that I mean; why I'm glad. I'm glad, John, because— You know very damned well why I'm glad. And why I'm so relieved I could—" Raising the heel of his cigar-hand King slid it across his beading forehead. "For God's sake, man, *don't you feel it yourself?*"

Pizarro leaned back and stared at him.

"Why—that's so!"

King went on. "From the very beginning I mistrusted the—the potentialities. What a bum deal it was for you to be stacked up against—and all in your innocence! I repeat, John, I saw it from the first. Here were the cards. Glenna Peterson, myself; put us out of it, and who has there been in your life that amounted to *that* to you? Glenna you loved; me you have loved. . . . And then to have precisely the incarnation of *us two*—to have to have that baby, youngster, growing woman, who was nothing under high heaven but the fatal, the vital, the ever-present, unescapable, double-distilled concentrate in one flesh of *precisely us two*—to have to have her ever-present, I say—in your home—in your

arms—your thoughts—God Almighty Lord of Pity! Whew!"

"That's so. That's so. . . ."

"I say and repeat, John—*whew!*"

"You know, King, I—I've been so twisted—so stood on my head—that somehow or other all that part of it—" Pizarro pressed his temples between his thumbs. He jumped up and walked away.

King called to him: "John! Come back here a second. . . . Sit down," he said, when, docile in his queerness, the fellow had returned.

And now the moment against whose need he had been storing up the chiefest part of his resolution had arrived, and the man who sat in judgment sat more heavily than ever before in his life. He put on the black cap.

"Sit down and look here, John, my son. While we were barking at each other this morning there was some talk of a question as to which of us was to go away. Of course that was all tommyrot. You know, I know, who's to go. And it's you. Eh?"

Pizarro nodded. He nodded as he had done before, with an air of distraction which might have passed for sober thought.

"We're not, then, to leave it to her to—"

"We're *not*. . . . John, you've not only got to beat it, for a while, but for so long a while that it might as well be considered as forever. . . . Do you get that? At all?"

Studying the painted flower in the middle of a bread-and-butter plate, Pizarro nodded, nodded, nodded. As on another occasion in the afternoon shadow of this same deck-awning, King saw the face before him yellowed and desiccated. Abruptly then Pizarro was on his feet, walking along the port side toward the bow. King followed, his own face an odd color, with the pain of the thief that was crucified. He caught him up on the forward deck, beside the miniature capstan.

"Because you see, John, technically, the taboo *isn't*—never *was!* But, John! Damn it! damn it! it *is*. It's still there. And if you and she should live to be a hundred— Well, listen. Your heathen islander can uproot the taboo-thing—and yet the very ground it stood on will simply go on being taboo. The ghost of the damned thing will never be gotten rid of. No matter what you tell yourself, it's *there, there, there!* . . . And neither you nor she—

nor even I—nor the people that knew you as parent and child—"

Pizarro whirled on him. His face, parchment a moment ago, was hot with blood.

"God alive! Don't you suppose *I* know? What makes you think you've got to tell *me* all this? I'm over six years old! God alive!"

After studying him for a moment, King put an arm around him, as he would have done for any boy hit in the head. . . .

XII

GLENNA returned at four: the catboat, blotting the sun with its one wing, delivered her over the *Chimera's* side at a scramble and swooped away.

She was blown and burned, and before she did anything else she let her hair down, tossing it over her head with a graceful flip to run her fingers through it. And through it (the two men comprehended) to spy out the lay of their land. They glanced at each other, the one from the chair and the other from the wheel-box, winked and grinned, and were aware that their dramatics had succeeded when, flipping her hair back where it ought to be, Glenna let out a big breath, studied them for a moment with funny twitches about her lips, rubbed a forearm across her eyes, and crying, "You darlings! You peaches!" came and hunkered down on the deck between them.

"Hello!" she said. She let out another breath. "I feel so grand and glorious!" She began to braid her hair, twisting to look at one, then to look at the

other. "Hello, dad! . . . Hello, dad! . . . Dad—and dad! Button, button, who's got the dad? Isn't it frightful?"

She was wonderful from beginning to end of that high-hearted gesture of faith in the world salvaged and life intact—life indeed by a hundredth chance unchanged. With an ineffable lightness, a grace of pure play, she accomplished the stupendous act of readjustment: before their eyes, like a naïve and whimsical prestidigitator charmed with his own so lucrative dexterity, she put one dad in an empty hat, and having passed a handkerchief above it produced to the admiring delight of herself and the audience two equally good and equally solid dads. And all as quickly as that. One gesture. . . .

It would have been more amazing in its histrionic virtue had it been histrionics. But as King perceived, and Pizarro half perceived, and Glenna never perceived, it wasn't play-acting at all. It did itself. She felt that way.

Without her knowing quite why, and in the very train of disaster, she felt herself of a sudden fitter to the world she lived in, less oppressed, freer of spikes and knobs and elbows. Another thing

that had happened to her (since through the peeping-veil of her hair she had seen it was all right) was that she found her mind for the first time in years agog with decisions, teeming with plans. "Let out" indefinitely now "to play. . . ."

"First thing, tea! I'll go collect it." But before she was even up her enthusiasm had carried her far and away beyond tea. She launched into the coming winter.

"Let's take the *Chimera* across. We could too! What's an ocean? John Pizarro, we *could!* I'd adore to live on salt-horse, honestly, whatever it is. And of course you, King—(whatever *shall* I *call* you?)—listen quietly—here's my plan. You've never once taken an honest-to-God vacation, and you're going to take one this whole year. So that's arranged. *You are coming too!* . . . Don't look that way! Don't look at dad!"

Twisting her head with something not unlike a jerk she eyed Pizarro. "And don't *you!*" She was around and on her knees, squeezing Pizarro's two wrists. "Why—why, John, dad, I love you; love you to death. You know that. Don't you love me?"

"Glenn, you know as well as I—"

"Don't look at King! It's *me* you're talking to!"

"I've always—I've been terribly fond of you, Glenn."

She got back on her heels, then erect.

"I'll get the tea together." It had a flat sound. So had her "Be back in two minutes," as she let herself down into the companionway.

She was back in less than half that time; back as far as the middle of the ladder, her head and shoulders in the open and her hands holding on to the hatch-slides. For perhaps ten seconds she scrutinized the two, first one, then the other, her eyes nearly black, her face even whiter by contrast than it was.

By and by she said: "What's the idea? Who's been bothering my things? Who's been trying to pack my bags?"

And presently: "I simply want to be told. You see, I don't understand."

She came out and walked toward Pizarro. He got to his feet, motioned toward King, as much as to say "Ask him," and, passing her, walked forward.

For the second time that day he followed the narrow alley between the house and the port rail, on past the forward quarters and as far as the yawl's anchor-winch. And there he stood with his hands behind him, looking dead ahead.

After a few minutes he heard Glenna coming up the same alley. When she was within a few feet of him he turned. She stopped.

Both their faces looked hard. They looked like stone faces.

"You've no right to do this, John Pizarro."

"Why haven't I?"

"Because it's not my fault. It's your fault. Of your own free will, starting before I had any, you've made me dependent upon you. I love King, but I've lived without him. I've lived without almost everything in the world but you."

"You're very young, Glenn."

"This isn't honorable of you, dad."

"A man has to work that out for himself."

"You *are* doing it, then. Not King."

"Yes."

"And all this is because of a—an accidental technicality—dead and gone and as good as forgotten

twenty years. . . . Dad, I didn't know you and King were like that."

"A man has to work that out for himself."

"And because of that, I'm to be left—crippled. Rather, a cripple already, I'm to have my crutches taken away. . . ."

She was the one that broke. It was as if she had just then discovered that it wasn't incredible. She stuck out her arms, from the elbows, spreading her fingers in a kind of fan of pain.

"Dad! *Dad!* I'm Glenn! I'm your girl! I'm everything! *Dad!*"

He had the advantage of her; his part he had rehearsed. He turned his face nearly at right angles.

"Yes," he said, "but I'm young too. I've got a life of my own to make. Perhaps I'm a cripple myself. And if I'm a cripple I don't want my crutch back—I want to learn to walk. . . . You see, Glenn, King is your father. He has a right to you." Moving his feet, Pizarro completed the about-face. "You have no right to me."

She started to go toward him. After a step, however, she halted. Presently she turned and walked away aft.

From that moment till the time she and her father left the *Chimera's* side in Phann's dinghy an hour later she said hardly a word. She went through the movements of doing what was directed or suggested, as cold as a cataleptic and as obedient as a somnambulist. When waking is dreaming, it is not different from sleep.

Only once did anything from outside the leaden ring of her torpor break through. But that one thing was in its quality so simple and yet so vividly an artifice of the dramatist of all their fates as to leave upon her imagination an imprint never quite to be lost.

Seated on the forward thwart of the dinghy as it moved away from the *Chimera's* side, her feet amongst her bags, her forearms crossed in her lap and her head sunk slightly on her neck, she continued to stare at nothing; and here the nothing was the water just beyond the gunwale on her left. The afternoon had fallen breathless, and in the mirror of the water, as Phann swung the dinghy's head toward the club, the yawl, inverted, swept slowly across her arc of vision. It was all, from first to last, not more than half a dozen heart-beats, but it was complete.

No detail was blurred; in the aureate tide of the late afternoon light she saw the *Chimera* as it were sailing without sails, the black hull glistered in beetle colors, the white line of the bootstripe, the sulphur-yellow line of the trunk-deck's overhang, the ribbon of the awning, strong primrose in the sun, and still on below, wheeling their golden shrouds at an enormous depth across the submarine firmament, the masts. And on the forward deck, curiously gone-to-China in his posture of upside-down, she saw Pizarro. She saw him in clear color and unbroken line. From beneath the rail of the sweeping vessel, for three quarters of the moment of vision, she saw him looking up at her; then she saw him turn on his heel deliberately to lose himself in contemplation of other vistas of that bizarre new hemisphere which he had entered, a mer-world drowned in a looking-glass. And just as he had done this, the edge of a swirl from Phann's oar-blade caught him and the yawl, pulled them into a thousand grotesqueries, broke them on flaming wheels, scattered them in bright discs, and swallowed them up then in the one prismatic holocaust of the dinghy's wave.

So swiftly and completely had she surrendered her

imagination to the allegory that at the instant of this symbolic dissolution she felt herself gripped by a horror and grief beyond the forces of her sanity to combat; her hands were cold, and the muscles of her larynx were paralyzed.

Afterwards she was sitting as she had sat before; by no move or sign could King (watching her eyes from the stern-sheets) have guessed that between two featherings of Phann's oar something had occurred that was to leave its image indelible on the retina of her soul.

The next morning they passed Pizarro in the *Vinyard,* the island steamer overhauling and leaving him well away on the starboard hand, one small and one still smaller peak of sail, beating in light winds to the west. . . .

XIII

The *Chimera's* more or less indefinite cruise brought her to an archipelago as nearly golden as any is in the seven seas and in a cove in a strait no broader than a river between two of the greater islands the anchor was let go.

Here was a terrain prodigious and beautiful in the very multitude of its uglinesses, its mountainous agglomeration of geological mistakes and squalors. Tablelands reared on tablelands, showing enormous cliffs and supporting in still dizzier pinnacles a wilderness of iron and granite blades. And beneath this treeless upland bathed in sunshine and rain and breathing volcanic wisps from its innumerable fissures; beneath it, half hidden, sometimes altogether subterranean, the whole mountain was rotten with ravines, a thousand times bisected, split up, eaten into by sunless defiles and burrowed under by labyrinthine caves. And even in the remotest gorge, even in the deepest cavern, there was always under-

running every silence a sound of unrest, a ground-roar, as though of the ocean rolling its weight on encircling white miles of beaches.

Pizarro went ashore and traversed this island of Manhattan from north to south, under the ground. Getting out at Bowling Green he walked back north through Broadway. With him he carried, like an undigested lump in the stomach, an enduring surprise.

In his dreams of strange ports of escape he had never dreamed of a port as strange; in his wildest need of an island of refuge he had never imagined one as desert as this. He ought to have turned out in a goat-skin tunic, a hairy umbrella, a telescope, and a gun.

The umbrella at any rate. It began to rain. He stepped into a doorway as the weight of it came down, sluicing the glazed cliffs with cataracts of large black drops. It wasn't like an autumnal rain; it smelled too strongly of earth and freshness; it couldn't be September; it must be spring. Pizarro grasped at this illusion of the beginning of a new season and clung. Perhaps, after all, in the drifting of his blank idiocy, he had been right; perhaps here

in the clutter and clatter of another epoch of his existence he would find, if there was one anywhere, the strong medicine he was going to need.

A man coming through the doorway looked at him, looked a second time, and put out a hand.

"Dogged if it isn't! Well, well, Johnnie Pizarro, I'll be dogged!"

It was one of his old partners.

"How long you been back among us, John? Incog as all hell, too. What's the game, John?"

"Well, I don't know, Abe."

"Slid up from the bushes to show the wise ones some new little thing?"

"I'm looking it over, Abe, looking it over. Maybe so."

And as the other, growing a little awkward between two words, turned up his collar and, with a "Look in on us, Johnnie!" ran for a cruising taxicab, Pizarro repeated it to himself: "Maybe so. Who knows? Perhaps I shall."

That became the rallying-cry of his fumbling, stumbling, but resolute advance against the enormous odds of the winter. "I'm looking it over." It was a reed to lean on; but, after all, he hadn't

wanted much to lean on; he wanted to learn to walk. "Perhaps I shall."

For nearly a month in that gathering autumn he led perhaps as fantastic a life as any in the seven millions. Keeping the yawl in commission, moored in an urban backwater, he carried on the illusion and routine of the voyager. Shutting out with the closing of hatch and curtaining of port-holes the reality of gas-tanks, sorry playgrounds and breweries, he shut himself in with the wind-blown silence of an imagined sea. He read a great deal. He talked to himself. He paced the narrow limits of the cabin, two steps by four. And so pacing, with the rotary shift of his weight, a slight careening motion was communicated to the deck under his feet and the paneled bulkheads around him, as though in reality the craft were in passage across a lazily heaving watery plain, an ocean secure and lonely.

The trouble was that by the act of shutting himself in with this elaborate pretense of solitude and oblivion, he shut himself in with the very quintessence of the memory against which he would have drunk the waters of any Lethe—the table at which Glenna had eaten with him—the transom on which it

had been her wont to curl and read in dark weather—the books, in the case there, which she had read—her door—and when he opened it, the mahogany cubicle within, not yet to his senses free of the fragrance of her habitation, nor even quite of her visual presence, as though sometimes, phantom in the corner of his eye, he caught a glimpse of her in the mirror, twice-phantom in the reflection, the night-braids framing her face and falling, remingled, down the hollow of her young breast as she rose in her bunk, as she used to do, to send him, in her grave-blithe contralto, her "Good morning!" or "Good night!"

And when this would drive him out, when, finally, calling Phann or Blackstone to ferry him across the deliberate half-dozen yards of sea-water left, he went ashore, it remained his trick to land as if upon an alien and exotic soil, and to wander the city with the detachment of the explorer, "looking it over" still.

Perhaps he did it all in this fashion because he was self-conscious, because he was indeed a little bit ashamed to find himself on this, rather than on the other side of the world. Nine-tenths unconsciously he may have seen himself as a man who, having

sworn at beauty's feet to chop the giant's head off, finds himself boiling the encounter down to a sly kick on the monster's toe.

Something of this would go far to explain his otherwise inexplicable way of life when, driven out of the *Chimera* by memories in league with a falling thermometer, he took a bachelor room in a tower in the upper thirties and like a wintry eagle with one eye open settled himself to haunt the empyrean. For, saving that he had traded his dinghy for an elevator and his imagined ocean for the bleak solitude of the tablemountain-tops around, there was scarcely any change. He still continued to figure himself as going ashore when he descended into the city, and more definitely the outlander with every week that passed. More and more his forays were in the evening or late at night, and either he prowled out where the streets were darkest and emptiest or he shouldered in where the crowds were loudest and the lights like noon. For with this sense that he had of a romantic turpitude in hanging on here within a stone's throw of Glenna and King, when by everything but words he had pronounced his own sentence to exile in the safe antipodes, there grew up a dread lest they should

come somehow to know it, either by seeing him themselves in a chance shopping or theater trip, or (a hundred times less unlikely) by knowing some one who had. So that in the end, if he never arrived at the point of actually forgoing a taxi or a theater because of it, yet there was always something in him thinking of what would happen if the cab were to crash or the theater to take fire, and he was to be hurt, and his name taken and the whole thing in the morning papers.

Naturally, as one month of this sort of thing followed another, it had a profound influence upon Pizarro's character. Unceasing vigilance is *at* the price of something of more than passing value in the make-up of a man's soul. And since the soul is desperately mixed up with the flesh, the loss of inward weight was accompanied by an outward and visible wearing down; as with an animal that hibernates, the year turning toward spring found him almost cadaverous about the jaw and behind the ears, and with the smile he had taken to wearing (his lips pulled back tight across the ridges of his teeth, so that in certain lights it looked like a tickled boy's grin, and in others like the smirk of a fellow having

his leg off without an anesthetic) he need not have worried so much about being recognized by the casual eye of some past acquaintance in the tangled light of the Broadway crowd.

Part of this wastage, of course, was simply pay in arrears for the thirty months that had gone before. No matter what might have happened now, the prolonged, uncalculated nervous strain of that bedevilment inside of him was bound to be satisfied in the end by one grand crash. Too many winds had been sown in secret; the whirlwind had to come.

But added to this strain that was past there was the strain that continued to go on, the enormous nervous expenditure of day-by-day. For now that the mess was uncovered and its messiness realized, now that he could look at the fact that he was fighting for his life and that he was being fought back, being kicked and clawed and beaten about the head without any reck of rules, he could also look at the odds and see how enormously they lay against him, and there was half the adversary's battle without a stroke.

He was trapped like a rat. He was held as helpless as the man in a fever is to hold back or hasten

the given hours of its course. It was mainly in his room, more alone than he could have been on any expanse of ocean, that he tried and tried to come to grips with the thing, while there was still strength left in his hands. But the trouble was that it was forever changing in midfight; no sooner had he got his deathhold fastened on one thing than it had twisted in his fingers and showed him the mocking face of its own antithesis.

For alternate periods measured by the swing of the diabolic pendulum of his emotions, he faced now this, now that. For days he would sweat to contrive a tourniquet to stop the leakage of his life-blood: "She *is* my child!" Careless of all its implications he would grab at anything to stuff in that wound of emptiness. "I can't have spent on her from her first babyhood all the forces I possessed of love and care, of word and act and simple nearness, without her having become in ninety-nine hundredths of the truth my flesh, my child!"

So he would argue, sitting motionless with his fists on his table, or walking around and around his room in the sky, breathing out of the corners of that grin or grimace, through the day, pitilessly white

with the snow on square miles of house-tops, through the night, squared off below him like the flaming gridiron floor of hell. And to *make* it true he called to him all the recollections of their years in the house at Laurel Point, scene by homely scene, a bath, a sleepy tuck-in, a summer Sunday breakfast in the garden, a state dinner with three birthday candles and vast-syllabled discourse, an almost mute half-hour in the chair before the fire on a Christmas Eve. That was the reality of fourteen years. Against that what could the flim-flam unreality of thirty months imagine itself to weigh? She was his daughter. She was his Glenn, his girl. Nothing could take her in truth away.

And having made it substance, it was all the more puissant to confound him when, next day, next week, the pendulum swinging in the other direction again, he was trying even more feverishly to prove the contrary, that Glenna was no child of his. Nothing of him was in her veins; no conceivable bar lay between them; nothing on earth could be so laughable and abominable as that lie. He was John Pizarro, a childless widower of New York. She was a bachelor's daughter of New Haven, a Glenna King. One

"Glenna King.". . . And now that he wanted nothing so much as to have the poisoned blood let drain, there was the tourniquet he had twisted, a strangling fabric, tableau on tableau, taunting him with the very form and color of his parental solicitudes and hopes and anxieties and of her dependence and adoration and filial faith: till he seemed bodily whisked away from here and caught there, prisoner in that house hidden at the end of what had been his road home throughout the decade and a half of his heart's serenest continence.

And gradually now, by the selfsame process that begot men's earliest gods and devils, that house at Laurel Point became the symbol of the immaterial thing he was fighting for, fighting against, a god and a devil alternately. He saw it the tower of his strength when he was in his father-and-daughter phase; when he would have made of Glenna a chance and eligible anybody, he saw that house as the word "Thou shalt not!" the ark of a mystic consanguinity, the imperishable, inviolable Taboo. . . .

So he leaned on it, and he hated it. More than once, deep in either mood, he had an impulse to go

out and look at the place in the stone-and-shingle flesh, but he never did. *It* came to *him* however in a dozen subtle ways. When he had gravitated to New York, knowing instinctively that in the crowd and in the adventure of buying and selling re-undertaken lay his strongest hope of getting over the river (and before he had to realize that even that hope was forlorn), he had thought to give himself the pabulum of his own routine affairs to start on, his receipts and payments, his reinvestments, his this and that. With other things from his bankers, then, there were forwarded reminders of Laurel Point's existence in the form of tax-bills, wage-checks, to be made to the man under the hill who looked out for the closed house, and premium-statements as insurance of various sorts fell due.

According as his bias of the moment happened to be, he saw these expenditures as willing doles dropped in the tithe-box of a protecting faith, or as tribute wrung from him by a tyrannous scheme of blackmail. The morning in late May when the fire-insurance statement lay on his table it seemed a plain writ of authority, saying in black and white that that house and all it held of Glenna was his possession, and that

everything to the contrary was as flimsy as a nightmare that would pass. And by that afternoon, sitting down to attend to it with pen and checkbook, by a fiercer swing of the pendulum, a sudden shift of emotional vision, he beheld it as the other thing. Getting out of his chair he studied the paper from a distance with a passionate resentment.

"What do I care what happens to you? Burn to the cellar if you want to; I don't want a penny's restitution for the riddance. Damn you, I'm not yet in the 'fire-loss game,' I *hope.*"

Leaving it there he got out and "went ashore." And it was that same evening, in a theater he entered at random, that the thing happened which he had been dreading all the winter long. He saw Glenna.

He saw King first. King was in a box not more than twenty feet from Pizarro's stall in the orchestra, and it was when the lights came on after the first act, and while Pizarro was getting to his feet to pass out for a cigarette and a breath of air, that his eye chanced to stop on that head in profile above the red-plush rail of the neighboring box.

At first his brain said no; it was only after an

appreciable instant that it could accept the fact of the whiteness of the hair it had remembered as dun gray. Next it had to engage with the queerness of the expression of the half-face, the cheeks ribbed diagonally with their pressure over the locked teeth. And so another instant was wasted before Pizarro realized that, not only was he seeing King, but King had seen him.

And still the instants went on piling up while he balanced there in perilous public. After King's head, among the five or six in the upholstered cave, his attention fastened upon a blond one, male and young, and a name flipped out of the archives; "Park!" And then he saw Glenna. And his mind wanted a few watch-ticks to accept her too.

She looked keen. There was a brilliance about her of a blade scoured with sand. He marked an acceleration of movement, a heightening of pitch (he heard her laugh, at something the youth beyond her was saying), an extraordinary intensity of interest in the moment's thing, and, first and last and most disconcerting of all, her mien (where he had remembered it wind-browned) of red and white.

At about this time his brain got around to the matter of communicating with his legs. But what should they do, and where should they take him? By going to his left he would be able to turn his back; but three-quarters of the seats and knees in the row were that way. Would that look odd? He was aware all the while that he hadn't half his wits about him. Making a drunken gambler's decision at last, he started for the side aisle, head-on to the danger, and then as he squeezed through the alley of legs the purpose of his hat and coat occurred to him. So the seatholders were treated to the painful divertisement of a yokel-minded fellow, his head bent into his waistcoat and one half-filled sleeve flopping in the air, too impatient for his over-garments to wait till he was clear of their patent-leathers and their corns.

Gaining the semi-obscurity at the aisle's end behind the boxes, all hatted and coated and muffled, he found himself breast to breast with King.

"I *thought* you'd seen me," was all he could think to say. King, standing across the entrance to the corridor giving to the boxes, couldn't seem to think

of anything at all. From the muddle of conflicting emotions on his face one thing emerged, and that was wretchedness.

"But, King! Old man! *I'm* beating it!"

King let his lip fall out from between his teeth.

"From where, John?"

Then, before Pizarro could say, the worst had happened. Glenna was coming. Pizarro knew it first; he had the first sight of her through a sagging place between the curtains. And whether the impulse was the work of the senses, a half-glimpse of him out there in front only half-registered till now, or whether it was of the more abstruse promptings of an alert and uneasy heart, she was coming aimfully, one hand to her cheek in a gesture he had never seen before, and a look in the eyes in that red-and-white face that he was to spend a week in dirty hell trying to wipe out of his memory.

He hadn't time to warn King, but King guessed. Wheeling, they walked up the aisle, racing snails, prickles up their legs and spines, putting one hobbled foot in front of the other for the goal of the concourse in the rear, and the crowd.

It wasn't above ten seconds, the whole flight, but

ten miles wouldn't have been so awful. And awfuller still—even if they reached the crowd, what then? Glenna, her head at an odd angle and that hand still on her cheek, was halfway up the aisle behind them, walking in hobbles too.

Pizarro's luck might be dying; it wasn't dead yet. Now with its last strength it turned the most amazing trick of its career. As Pizarro in his gray-brown half-belted coat and his clear-beaver hat reached the fringe of the loiterers between the posts he beheld a smooth-shaven man in a gray-brown half-belted coat and a clear-beaver hat shouldering through from the opposite side, returning evidently to resume his seat.

Pizarro didn't need to tell King; King knew a miracle sent from heaven when he saw it. As the stranger passed, Pizarro stepped behind him, King for his part turned and walked back with him down the aisle, elbow to elbow, mystifying the fellow with mumbled questions about the weather out of doors, and where to get programs and the like, until, with a mild surprise at meeting his daughter looking a little ill out here in the house, he gathered her in with a "Thanks, old man," cast over his shoulder and took

her back to the party. . . . While Pizarro, his coat whisked off and over his arm, his identifying hat crushed under it, and only the one idea in the starry void of his brain to make himself look unremarkable and provided-for, found himself addressing incoherences to a perfectly strange lady in a shaded angle near the smoke-room stair.

He didn't know and he didn't much care what he was trying to say. What does a man say to a strange lady of the sort he very presently discerned her to be?

On the other hand, what need has such a one to have anything coherent said to her by a strange gentleman in the condition she very presently discerned him to be in—safety on the way to a priceless attack of hiccoughs (in the portentous blowing-with-emotion stage in fact) and needing only a little guidance and a little feminine sympathy on the way? . . .

"Taxi? Surest thing we could get a taxi *this* hour."

In the taxicab he lay back in his corner staring at her, his hands hanging down between his knees.

"Well, and now, lovie, we got to tell the driver.

. . . I can see what you need; you need a little glass of somethin' strengthenin'—ain't that it, you poor dear sweetheart?"

"Listen! Do you happen to know where I can get some Irish whiskey?"

"*Ask* me, you good-lookin' boy!"

"Will you be so good as to stay with me there while I drink it? And not leave me alone?"

"Oh, ask me again!". . .

She stayed with him there, or thereabouts, two thousand and some odd hundred dollars worth, that is to say, one day less than a week. . . .

When he waked up from that pawed and bleared and tumbled dream of a hundred and fifty hours, Pizarro climbed back to his room in the sky, lay in a chair, and read the wobbly figures in the ledger of his life.

His head was aching. His tongue was vile. His luck at last was dead.

He saw himself rumpled and smelling of filth, and when he recalled the glimpse of a girl, coming toward him behind a curtain with a hand to her cheek and a light in her eyes of "No, but it *couldn't* be!" he wanted to heap down on the floor and hide

his face in his arms, lest those eyes should see and by some chance recognize in the thing underfoot what defeat had left of John Pizarro.

For he was beaten. That was done.

Opening the window to clear the room a little of himself, he felt the air of the new summer flowing in over his cheeks, a mockery.

He walked across the floor and lifted the telephone receiver. There was some delay with the number; his nerves surrendered to panic, he jiggled the hook with disordered violence. Then he was steady.

"Blackstone? I want the *Chimera* ready for sea in three days. No, the paint will do. I'll send you a check right now; don't leave any bills outstanding. Three days, that's right!"

"I've tried," he said to himself aloud, when he got to his feet. "Honestly, I've tried."

It was true. He had tried to face it standing up. Now, with that message to Blackstone, he knew he had turned his back. He had ducked his head between his shoulders and commenced to run.

Beside his check-book on the table he saw the insurance-slip, lying as he had left it, the premium now two days overdue. He crumpled it in a hand

and dropped it on the floor. With the act, in the depths of his weariness and weakness, nostalgia swept over him.

If only seven years could have been erased! If only he could have rubbed these bloodshot eyes of his and found those seven years a creature of his sleep! And the reality of all of them back in that house again; that high-walled garden of peace!

The pendulum was sweeping east.

With an extraordinary vehemence he longed to put his hands on the cool stone corners of that house, grip them tight, hang on, never let it go. . . .

XIV

A CAKE with twenty-one candles around its edge and one in the center; the one in the center for Glenna "to grow on." To grow *young* on, if King were to have his wish.

"I'll light it and bring it in when the time comes," he told his colored man, as, passing through the pantry and buttoning the last of his waistcoat buttons, he set about turning on the lights in the studio, a vast high early-Cleveland masterpiece, as ugly a room as none can be but the place an architect will take and cleave to.

Having made nebulæ of yellow brightness here and there in the chamber's lower levels, seen that the phonograph was in order and the dance-records segregated, ash-trays distributed, cigarettes handy, and the punch-bowl and glasses properly set out, he crossed to the three tall windows and opened them, feeling a heaviness of air in the room, and presently, stepping over a low sill, he stood in the out-of-doors, his elbows propped on the rail of an

iron balcony that overhung a verdureless garden three floors below and an areaway giving at a distance upon a square faintly lemon-colored with lights and rustling with the more than ordinary goings and comings of this evening in Commencement week.

The thought occurred to him: twenty-one years ago, counting almost from this hour, he was standing by an open window in another building less than half a mile away, tears running down his cheeks, chin and coat-front, his ears intent upon the lines of a comedy that was being read behind him—a doctor trying and trying to explain, a boy trying and trying to comprehend, that a baby was alive and a woman dead.

King felt old. He had never, somehow, till within the past ten months, calculated upon growing old. At fifty-five he had seemed in his forties; at fifty-six now he was by as much too old as he had been too young before. If it was not senility he felt laying its hands on him it was at least a weariness from which, unlike any he had hitherto known, there seemed no promise in his tissues of recuperation. Between one summer and another he had been put on the losing side.

And the part of it all that was truly saturnine was that, whereas in his comparative youth he had never cared more than moderately for dancing, the theater (he would rather read a play than see it), supper-parties, house-parties, card-parties, and all the run of things that go to make the social life of the normal bachelor, now that an almost arm-chair age had taken possession of him there had arrived the necessity of "going the pace," decking his spirit out like a painted he-harridan, running his daughter (or, nominally, his ward during her father's extended absence) here to a ball, coaxing her there to a matinée, playing feverish impresario to gaiety, *agent provocateur* to all sorts of goings-on, procurer of eligible fellows, of distractions without end, even, at times, of temptations—anything, no matter how perilous, that would serve to occupy her imagination vehemently, and commit her irrevocably to here and now.

He would have smiled, had he been in the smiling mood, at the thought of fathers no solider than he, and the simplicity of *their* problems and *their* alarms about *their* daughters at twenty-one.

Yes, temptation even, if temptation would serve.

Girls survive that sort of thing, and parents do too.

If it had been hard through the winter, it had been doubly hard for the past ten days. Since the evening in New York when he had seen, and only by a thousandth chance of fool luck prevented Glenna from seeing, the man they had both figured as almost anywhere but near, he had felt, added to the work in his wearying hands, the menace of an attack from the rear. The element of time intruded. It became a never-easing pressure. "Make haste!"

There were moments when he cursed Pizarro. There were moments when, recollecting the look in Pizarro's eyes and all about him, he cursed every one and everything else.

He passed a hand over his face and deliberately brightened; Glenna had come into the studio behind him. Turning back into the window he surveyed her gala get-up with a magnified applause of wrinkle and twinkle.

"Glenn, child, you most certainly are *the—*"

"Say it, Papa King. 'The gnat's knee!' "

King swallowed. "Mmm—yes—precisely!" He abominated it; it wasn't Glenna; it was any girl. And because it wasn't Glenna, but any other girl

alive, he had to cheer her on with his galvanic jerks of approbation. No, it grew almost too hard.

Nor did it make it any easier that he had, all the while, a restless sense of double-dealing on her part as well as on his. The acquiescence which had marked her whole way of being since the moment when, turning away from John Pizarro on the *Chimera's* foredeck, she had come aft in silence to pack her bags, impressed King more and more as something not Glenna, something separate and aridly impish, a marionette on strings for his amusement in front of the tent where Glenna lay, if not sulking, at least half dazed for the time with mystification, half sick with nostalgia, hugging to herself the hurt of blows that must have seemed to her altogether wanton.

As he studied her now in her cunning and somehow mocking harlequinade of flapperhood, complete to the next-to-the-last shrewd detail of the wise young herd, he was hollow for a moment with a sense of his own elaborate futility. Yet he was too deep in it; he had to flounder on.

"By the way, dear, wasn't there some talk a little while ago of docking the mane?"

She turned to a mirror, slanting her eyes at the umbrous asset of her hair.

"W-e-l-l, if you think it would—" And then, her eyes still in the glass and her tone on the same level: "King, *was* it John?"

"John—who? What? When?"

He could have given himself three cheers. He had done it. For days he had been sweating with doubt whether he could, and now at need, almost automatically, he had pulled it off.

"John Pizarro," she said.

"*Pizarro!* Where? you idiot. *When?*"

"The other night at 'The Jackass.' *You* know, King."

"I—Glenn, I don't get you. I *don't* know, you see."

"There was some one, after the first act, in a gray coat and a gray hat, King, walking—"

King put his fists in his pockets and was amused.

"*Doubleton!* Well, of all—*Fred* Doubleton! I remember now, you seemed kind of cross-eyed—but, Lord, child, listen—why, you saw him *face to face!*"

For another moment she continued to read him

in the mirror, then, letting out the breath she had been holding, she believed. Fire ran from her jaws to her temples, her shoulders relaxed, and turning away she walked toward another part of the room. "So it wasn't, after all."

When she had left the *Chimera* and come home with King, under the compulsion, not of his wish, but of her own moral paralysis, there was a time of more than a month when, as they say of certain sick people, she "didn't try." Little by little the vital forces of her character reasserted themselves, but they were turned wrong side out, all centered, now doggedly, now in a fumbly panic, upon the task of untangling the knot at the core of her life. Question and answer, and that answer another question wanting another answer, she walked the treadmill in the silence and the dark.

"Why did he say I had no right to him? Why did he want me to go?"

"Because I was part of his betrayal. I was the ugly evidence."

"Yes, yes, that's all very well; but how about his wanting to go and leave me, even long before he found that out? For he did, you know, he did."

"Because I was a drag on him. Because I kept him from work, from life, everything?"

"Yes, yes, again; but that was only because he was fonder of me than of lots of other things, and we had better times together than he would have found anywhere else. A fool could see that."

"Well, then, if that's so, why should he let a thing like—no, but he didn't hold it against King; you could tell that—why did he hold it against *me?* How was *I* changed?"

"I wasn't changed. But I'd always been a drag on him. A man like him wants the society of women as women, not as daughters."

"Yes, yes, yes; but it wasn't *I* that asked—"

Around and around in the darkness, the treadmill that ground no grist but madness. . . .

Madness and bitterness. Glenna was human; none was ever more so. What kept it simply bitter, and never turning sour, was the deliberate statement she made to herself: "There's a catch in this, Glenn. There's some one thing you haven't understood. And it can't last forever. One day he'll come back and tell you. Wait and see."

Nevertheless, not being by nature a dweller un-

derground, she had to take it out on something, visibly. And when as the weeks passed she watched the transparent schemes of her new and worried father taking shape it eased her inevitable chagrin and salved for the moment the hurt to her feminine self-esteem to seem to play the game he had got for her. It was something, at least, to be able to step out of herself, to watch herself as from an ambush of amused disdain, being admired and pawed-after and calculated-upon by undergraduate men-of-the-world, who needed no prompting to see in her a wide-eyed young thing, hungry for life, and, though as yet unattained, not unattainable. It was more sometimes. Sometimes, nagged on by the intolerable pain at the bottom of her heart, she would run through a week at a pace of sheer fever and bravado, only to be fetched up some moment by the thought: "Heavens! If he were to see you now he'd think you *were* like this!" And with that the piper had come for his pay. Wave after wave of homesickness for the reality of the land where she belonged, which seemed almost to her heightened anxiety to begin to fade, passed over her, knocked her down, and sent her sweeping again in that airless circle of questions

only to be answered by questions. "Why did he want to go?" "Because—" And nothing at last to cling to but that single word of her will: "One day he'll come back and tell you. Wait and see."

On the evening of her father's theater-party in town, ten days ago now, something had happened that seemed, in the queer way it hit her nerves, as arresting as just that thing. It was as mysterious and peremptory as if she had been tapped on the shoulder by a hand that had vanished when she turned to see. If there had been any other sequence of cause and effect it had never reached her consciousness. So far as she could say she was giving the whole of her attention to Pink Whittler's memoir of some dead love, on her right, and then at a certain moment her scalp was hot and her arms from the elbows down were cold. Then she was in the corridor behind the boxes. Then she was out in the aisle of the open house. King was there. He was moving away from her, toward the rear. With him, beside him at any rate, was a man in an ordinary gray coat and an ordinary gray hat. For a little distance she walked after them. She held her head with one hand, as if, if she didn't, it would begin to revolve on the

axis of her neck. And she heard herself reciting, like something learned by rote out of another Alice in Wonderland: "It isn't; it is! . . . It is; it isn't!" Even when they had turned and come back and she could study the disturber in gray (as King had pointed out now) face to face, the silly distich went on whispering behind her pulse, "It is; it isn't. . . . It isn't; it is!" and her sense of some occult chicanery in it all seemed to want more than an optical fact to cry it to shame for a smoke-without-fire, and more than a minute of reasoning; more indeed than a week.

"It was; it wasn't!"

Really the thing had given her a start. It was as if she had been half asleep for ten months; for ten days now she suffered the confusion of returning consciousness.

If the memories of her lost world with which she had fed and tormented her heart through the winter had seemed vivid as the life, they were not so vivid as these that came trooping now; nor was it their vividness alone that set them separate, but an odd shift of perspective; so that episodes which should have been familiar were seen as from angles that

never were; they came to her distorted, in the light and shadow of never-before-imagined rays . . . Sometimes it seemed that she had best give up and *be* the flapping young thing she had played so cynically at being, forget that she had ever been anything else, and so catch at a febrile peace.

"It was; it wasn't!" It was like an interminable hidden daisy-plucking at the back of the beating of her heart. "It wasn't; it was!"

And after all now, *it hadn't been.* . . .

As she took her eyes from the mirror in the studio and turned her back on King, she had a dreadful feeling that she had been played for a fool. It made it no less dreadful, that it was she herself that had played herself for the fool that would believe that John Pizarro was ever coming back again.

King followed her, his relief half forgotten in the concern of his conscience at sight of the way she walked.

"But, Glenn— Oh, dear child—what's all this that's been getting into your funny head—about—about—"

"About John?"

As she wheeled, the thing they both saw enormous

in the moment was the breaking of a silence that had somehow grown to be nearly one year old.

He could only stand dumb, taken too sharply unawares, while she went on with the destruction.

"Yes; about John. . . . King, will you tell me something now? Why did John—not want me any longer?"

There was something heady about it. There was a challenge too impulsively naked to be met on anything but naked impulse.

"He wanted you too much."

"Say that—over?"

"He was too fond of you. So he went away."

She turned and started on again toward the hallway leading to her room. After a few steps she began to laugh. She came back and stood before him.

"Father," she said. (It's odd how far some of our actions run ahead of our thoughts: it was the first time she had ever addressed King as "Father.") "Father, I don't know why I'm giggling. I've always loathed people that giggled at times such as this or blanched and mantled or fainted away. . . . But will you tell me in words of one syllable, please, why, if

he loved me, he should want to hurt me, murder me, break everything I ever was in tiny pieces and throw them—well?

"What time is it?" she asked after a moment.

King, mottled and distracted, took out his watch. Glenna glanced at it, nodded, and said: "It's all right to tell me, you see. I'm of age."

"You were his daughter, Glenn."

"If you really mean you believe it was—that sort of thing—the answer is that he didn't go until after he had discovered I *wasn't* his daughter."

"You can say you weren't—aren't—his daughter till the last day of eternity; you can stand on the mountain-top and shout yourself hoarse—Glenn, my dear."

"And what?"

"And the fact will remain that throughout the part of your life when almost everything you'll ever know was being got together and crystallized, you *were* his daughter. And that stands. John Pizarro *was* your father. And neither you nor he nor I, nor the people in the world who knew you—"

It was the first time Glenna ever spoke with the

flaming impatience that goes (when it goes) with youth: *"The people in the world!"*

King pursed his lips. He stuffed his hands in his pockets and looked at her through his brows, out of the tops of his miserable eyes. He tried to smile, to help to make her believe in his wisdom, but it didn't amount to much.

Once more she started to go; once more she returned.

"King, I want to go *home!*" Her lids were blistered with sudden tears. "King, oh, listen, couldn't we—couldn't you and I—I love you—couldn't we, for a little while, go down and live in the house?"

He stood and shook his head.

"Couldn't *I*, then? Would you—would you mind so terribly if, for a little while, I—I'm of age, you know."

She hadn't meant it the way it sounded. She threw her arms around his neck, crying, "No, King! no, no, King!"

The bell was ringing.

"I must look a sight," she said. This time she went all the way to her chamber.

She sat at her dressing-table and did nothing. The

two wings of the mirror brought forward, with her three reflections she made a little conclave, doing nothing.

The party was arriving all at once, by the sounds of it beyond the partitions.

King came to the door by and by to look in, rather shyly, and by that much remind her that she would want to be out.

She began to speak as soon as she heard the latch.

"All that being all settled now," she said, still studying the three of her, "let's talk freely, Papa King. It's such a relief. For instance; where is he?"

Technically, King didn't have to lie.

"I don't know."

"Probably quadrillions of miles away."

"Probably."

"Probably lost his heart a dozen times over to some lovely, lonely, calculating—"

"Knowing the human race, Glenn—probably."

"I'll be all fixed and out in a jiff, King. Go along!"

XV

King worked the phonograph, perching his bulk on the back of a wadded chair and presiding over the dance in mimicry of a country fiddler of the old days. He did feel relieved. He felt rejuvenated by this having things out in the open. It was like getting out of winter trenches. He ran his fingers through his hair and whooped it up, caught in his own game of the months past, so that more than one of the girls said to Glenna: "Your guardian is all right."

Glenna danced as ebulliently as King acted, while she was dancing; when she "sat out" on the iron balcony there was something in her sudden quietude of eye and limb, some unguessed abstraction that transfigured her, and by adding to her beauty a quality of enigma (a quality of immobile and passionate waiting) doubled and trebled its provocation.

When Park kissed her, she did nothing.

It went to his head, where a certain amount of gin had preceded it. He put his arm further around her,

hugged her against his body and chided her: "Why've I let you put it over me so long, you little devil?"

Park was riding on top of a very big wave. His finals behind him, another two days and he would be "in the world." He laughed at himself happily for the "kid boob" he had been. Not to have seen through this little girl Glenna's "phony line" of unattainability. What if he had let it "string him along" for another three days, say? Say!

With the first kiss he felt himself of a sudden the master male; he saw her young, big-eyed, hungry, and ready and ardent to be helpless. . . . With the second kiss, which he took now, nuzzling his nose in the neck of this heaven-given priceless sweetie, all the nebulous speculations, the impossible, ecstatic projects adrift on the boy's winter, rushed to shape in his heavy, handsome, straw-colored head.

"Let's beat it for a ride, love. . . . Say me; can do?"

Without much force she turned out of his arm and rested back against the railing. She looked at him in the electric dusk of the balcony with eyes almost somnolent in their level preoccupation. As though,

he thought for one uneasy instant, they were looking through him like a pane of glass at something immensely more distant. But then it was all right; it was because the music had stopped and others were coming out through the windows.

"You've got the next dance," he whispered. "Next after that—here! Get me? We've got to talk talk. See?"

Glenna had this dance with Park's room-mate. His name was John Browne and he was called "Body." He was as black as Park was blond, a wiser courtier and a better dancer. The last was what mattered. It made it easier for Glenna not to know she was with him.

The dance had a curious, clear-cut emotional pattern. For perhaps a half of it Glenna was imprisoned in a sort of trance, a kind of thrilled stupor, of romantic admiration. She saw the world as at once vast, spreading through immeasurable space, and in the small, panoramic. Against this background she saw the figure of John Pizarro wandering, standing erect and bareheaded in the wind, balancing with a sinewy and virile grace of strength to the roll of his

vessel on the element he had made his desperate road and his adventurous and melancholy home. . . .

Then there was the transition. For an instant she saw him upside-down. She saw him drawn-and-quartered on a fluent wheel, broken into more and more swirling pieces, which, colliding, destroyed themselves. . . .

Then she saw John Pizarro in a deep blue light, like a light poured by swollen stars. He was bending to touch with his lips the hand of a woman. Glenna saw this woman as really as she had ever seen anything in three dimensions. She was extraordinarily pale and extraordinarily lovely, with ropes of black, black hair falling down around her neck and over her white bosom, and large dark eyes which dwelt upon Pizarro in a gaze at once voluptuous and content. . . .

"What's wrong?" Glenna's partner was asking. They had come to a halt at a corner of the dance. "Got a 'heart'?"

"I'm—a little tired. . . . If you don't mind—"

"Come get some air."

As they made their way towards the windows,

dodging couples, Park came in from the dark to meet them.

"She's got a 'heart,' Parkie."

"I'll take her. Listen, Body; do this thing. Go pinch off Rita—there she goes with Ben—make it snappy and bring her outside. Important affairs. . . . Come on, Glenna, 'at-a-girl!"

In the rayed dark on the balcony Park put an arm of easy comfort about her, joggled her a little and grinned: "You feel a lot better now, don't you? Tell Papa no lies.

"This party is all right," he went on, "but can't we tail it off into something instructive? What about putting it up to Mr. King to spread it out to the Red Tavern?"

"Or McCabe's?" This was Body, joined now in the conference.

But the girl with him, Rita Flexner, said, "No, Park's hunch is better; the Tavern for mine, thanks."

"Would Mr. King take it all right, y'think? He seems like a good sport. He'd stick along with the push, of course. But *us* four in *my* car. . . ."

"Go on, honey, *you* put it up to him. Look what a night for a murder!" Ruth put Body's arm away and came around to be next to Glenna. She wasn't an especially pretty girl, being a little meager, but she made up for any shortcomings of the flesh by her vivacity, her wiseness, and her dark virility; in short "the way she handled herself."

She was the one (they all knew) to handle Glenna.

"C-o-m-e on, grow up, infant. Parkie's all right; he's a grand person. Come on, be a sport. You can work your guardian, I know. . . . "

"My guardian?"

Glenna turned her head. She appeared to study Rita with the half hesitant and quizzical preoccupation of one just about to see the point of a joke. Then, as slowly, she turned the other way to look up at the large blond boy who had an arm around her.

He clamped his jaw for firmness. "You come on!" He grinned and gave her a kneading squeeze for reassurance. "'At-a-girl!" He kissed her on the mouth.

Some of his breath got into her nose. It smelled of cigarettes, gin, and oranges principally, but qualifying this regnant aroma there lingered recollections of steak and lettuce and pastry and coffee with cream; an effluvium of young, voracious health.

Again without much show of force she turned out of his clasp and went and stood against the railing beyond Browne. Here the light from the last window fell on her face. She seemed to have seen the point of the joke.

"Children! Children! Children!"

She put a hand over her eyes, as if to pinch her wits into working order.

"Snap out of it!" Rita advised.

"You see," Glenna went on, her lips, twisted at the corners, inexpressibly benign, her voice clear and rapid, for the encore dance was nearing its end inside. "You see, I didn't quite get what it was all about, at first. . . . Children, children; but I can't play with you. I'm much too old."

"Sa-ay, where d'y' get that—"

"Ssssh! Oh, I'm far too old. I've seen too much

of life, children; what's worse, I've seen too much of love. I'm too much of a—what you would call —an old war-horse. . . . Play with that fire if you want to, kiddies; I've been too badly burned. . . . Park, I thought at least you knew. Last summer. When my father came down there to take me away from—"

"Father? Forget it. Your father was there with you."

"Park, my lamb! And did you really and honestly think that Johnnie Pizarro *was* my father? . . . No, no; King's my father. So you've actually been taken in by this 'guardian' business? This—what would you call it?—this 'stall'—until things blow over and quiet down? . . . My dear! No, Park, if you didn't know it, I'll tell you now, I'm growing tired of the 'stall.' I'd been living with Pizarro for *years*. And here's something you may perhaps understand when you're as ancient as I am: it wasn't because I wanted 'life' and thrills that I went with him; it was because I loved him. . . . And so it's rather funny now, isn't it, to picture a woman who has gone through the valley of the shadow of that sort of

thing—to picture her sneaking out to nuzzle and fumble in some dark back-road with some one that just wants to be bad?"

Her eyes engrossed in the shining window, her cheeks suffused with color as swiftly mobile as her breathing, she seemed toward the last to have forgotten her object and her audience.

The dance had come to an end; rhythm gave place to confusion.

On the balcony Park was the first to speak. He broke out with a hoarse, sulky vehemence.

"Bull! Every last damn word! Bull! Bull! Bull!"

"Hark! They're calling me. Come along, kids."

She stepped in through the window and saw, across the moving room, King bringing the lighted cake from the pantry way.

"Glenn! Oh, Glenn!" His face was a hundred wrinkles, trying to see her through the blaze. "Come show us whether you get married this year. Everybody watch and pray!"

He put it down on a stand.

"There, dear! And many, many like it! Blow 'em out!"

She leaned on her arms, halfway across the candles.

"King, let's make it a regular coming-of-age. Let's tell the world! You *are* my really and truly father, *aren't* you, father?"

He wasn't prepared for it, of course: it was mystification rather than amazement, however, that appeared to be his trouble. With eyes arrested and mouths agape all around him, he appeared intent on Glenna alone.

"Yes," he said presently. He nodded two or three times. "Yes, I am your father. If that means anything to any one, my beloved daughter. Yes."

"And the man from whose yacht you took me, last summer, father—the man with whom I had been living—was—simply—the man with whom I'd been living? Let's have that straight."

It was a wanton thing to do. To every one within hearing it seemed a piece of melodramatic bravado carried too far. King alone, mystified a moment ago, discerned what it was all about. His face settled into lines. Leaning forward, eye to eye with Glenna, he shook his head from side to side.

"*That's* no way out! Glenn! Glenn! Glenn! If you think it is—"

"I'm grown up, King. . . . And I don't and I won't believe in ghosts."

Lowering her head she blew out all but three of the candles.

"Not this year!" she laughed.

She left the three burning, and turning back through the abashed crowd went to her room. . . . King put on a one-step. . . .

Five minutes later, Park, who was looking for his things in the hall, glanced up to find Glenna beside him. She was dressed for out-of-doors and carried a small bag.

"Park, now that you know all about me, would you still like to take me for a ride?"

"What's the game?"

"If you'll come along quickly, I'll tell you. So be a—how was it?—a sport!"

Park came back before King or any of the somewhat awkwardly departing guests was aware that Glenna had left the house. His air was sulky, wor-

ried, and momentous. He wanted to speak to King privately.

Once aside, he said: "I don't care to be mixed up in this, Mr. King. It's none of my doing and my hands are clean. It was like this, I'm saying it straight. Glenna asked me to take her for a drive around. Then she said she wanted to go down the station way. At the station your daughter got out of my car, told me good-by, and said I shouldn't wait. She had a bag, and I suppose she has taken a train. That's straight. That's all I know."

"What time was it, Park?"

"Just now! Good Heck! Five minutes!"

"Thank you, Park. I was wondering what train would be going, around this time. But you don't know. Thank you, Park. Good night."

They had all got out. King heard their motors whirring in the street below. As he tramped around the walls of the studio, trying to remember where the time-tables had last been put, he said: "What a hell-awful mess! What a hell-awful mess!"

XVI

Pizarro left the yawl in the mouth of the little tidal river and, telling the men he would be back presently, crossed a swamp on a plank footway put down by some suburban land-scheme, and went up between the small wooded hills towards Laurel Point.

It was after sundown when he started: he saw his house (for the first time in these years) silhouetted against a sky cooling through green toward the night blue, a shape as dark as the rock it crowned, as if it were the rock itself, split in deep cones and squared in low pinnacles.

He stopped at the caretakers' below to take the key and to let them know he was there.

"No bother; don't come up," he told the man. "Just a few things I wanted."

When he entered the house, with the closing of its walls about him, he felt a lowering of his pulse as though an assuaging hand laying an anodyne upon his spirit had touched his flesh as well. It was as if still unseen in the darkness the fabric about him,

impregnated with so great a share of his remembered life, had said in a voice of tranquil surprise: "What's the trouble? What has happened in the very little while you've been from home big enough, after all, to warrant a thin face and heavy feet?"

For a moment he was taken in by this hypnotic conjuring. As its effect began to weaken he bestirred himself to keep it a little longer dominant. The lighting-system was not in order; luckily, at the expense of a dozen matches, he found a box of candles in a pantry, and with one aflame in either hand he walked from room to room to bring back the look of all the familiar things.

But he had never seen them by candle-light; the great part of them were in unfamiliar attitudes, moreover, sheeted like the dead in their cotton swathings; and with an impulse beyond reasoning about he began to tear the cloths from some of the pieces in the high cavern of the living-room—the couch that flanked the hearth like a settle, the homely wadded chairs, the teakwood stand where his smoking implements had been used to lie. And now that these were redeemed, the figures on the chintz of their coverings looking enormous in the near candle-light,

it was the cold that struck Pizarro as the wrongest circumstance of all. Out of doors it was full June, but none of it had got in through the stone; the air, sepulchral with the mold and chill of six winters, penetrated his flesh and crept about his heart, and throwing some of the wrappings in the chimney he set the candle to them.

He added to that weak fuel whatever he could find —a packing-case left empty in the hall—finally, going into the cellar, he brought up sawed wood and piled it on, as a traveler caught by night will do to keep the beasts away. Drawing his chair close to the crackle he sat hunched over, his elbows on his knees and his hands spread out to the heat, his eyes fixed in the flames.

He hadn't meant to do anything like this. But what he *had* meant to do he couldn't have explained. Leaving the East River that morning, surrendering at the last moment to a desire as old as his separation from Glenna, he had had the yawl's head swung to the north, to come into the Sound. What is the loss of a few miles and a few hours, in circumnavigations and years? He would leave the coast to-

morrow in place of to-day, that was the whole of the difference.

And not till just now, in the room full of wavering shadow-masses, where the pigmy blaze pushed back from the hearth little by little the dead giant weight of the chill, had he really understood that he was going away.

He had cried himself "Wolf! Wolf!" for so long that even when he had telephoned Blackstone to get the *Chimera* ready, even indeed when the anchor was got up this morning, it seemed still in Pizarro's imagination a thing that would somehow turn out not to be true.

Now he knew it *was* true. Now the miles with which in their huge lump sums he had juggled lightly and the years his imagination had swallowed with a tristful assent and a romantic sense of abnegation became realities, as big and as brutal as the life. His mind, racing, counted for the first time the obstacles, the sheer physical readjustments, the slow inevitable impoverishment of his spirit, the nostalgia growing month by month into the hundreds of months as, voyaging from nowhere to nowhere, he

himself grew old. The dream of escape had ceased to be a dream.

Nothing in this made him waver in his resolution. He was going, all right. In another minute, or another ten, he was going. This was all it did; it made him sit another ten minutes, and after that another ten and another sixty, hugging the fire in the room in this house full of shadows, in some sense as men with bitter work in the cold ahead of them will bake themselves through and through at the loggers' stove and store up all the heat they can in their tissues, "to go on."

Now that his resolution was taken he could indulge himself with safety. He didn't stay always on the hearth; relighting his candles from time to time he took his double shadow with him through the outlying rooms, recreating with his avid memory the presence of Glenna there. It was amazing, now that his mind was opened wide, how diversely the regions of the house gave her back to him. Each separate angle of the cold walls, each new vista opening to the beams of his candle flames, seemed to have charged itself with the husbanding of one especial moment in the chronicle of Glenna's girlhood.

In the bath she was still the baby, exquisite to the touch and rose-slippery and in peril of being dropped, and to his curiously bedeviled senses the dank plaster and the dead tiles gave out a fragrance of warm mist, an effluvium of talc and violet-water, boric acid and witch hazel and sweet olive oil. . . . And here was where the queer dream quality of the whole thing showed itself: for the baby wrapped in the big towel on his knees looked up into his eyes with the eyes of Glenna grown; they held his imagination prisoner with their wistful incredulity, their hurt reproach.

Along the hall near the dining-room he saw her running toward him, a child of ten, a maid's apron knotted enormously around her neck and sheafs of watercolor-daubed paper in either hand, crying: "Valentines! Look! I made 'em all! These half are for me to give you, and these half are for you to give me! . . ." And the voice of the ten-year-old was that grave-blithe contralto of the twenty-year-old that haunted the *Chimera* they had lived in, and all that other chimera too.

At the other end of the same hall he bent over her where she stood with a wave of her hair spread

across a finger. It was momentous. "I believe, young lady, *it's going to turn out to be red!*" . . . *"Oh, dad!"* . . . But now he was aware that she wasn't thinking of what she said: she was thinking of that day to come at Breton Shingle when she was to annihilate by the simple stratagem of her presence another woman with aureate hair. And "No," he said, "it's not to turn out to be red, after all. . . ."

In her chamber, in her bed, she lay asleep near an open window with the moonlight on her face, and when he kissed the hand resting on the cover, as his habit of fatherhood had been, she turned into a woman and he ran away. . . .

And now he was really running away. It was time to be out of there, for the river, and the yawl, and the sea. . . . Another ten minutes and he'd be gone. . . . Another half hour. . . .

But how many half hours already had he been there?

In the living-room, back once more by the fire, he saw the couch in whose corner (in her wonted place but not in her wonted attitude) he had found her sitting that night of her flight from the school of the cat.

He saw her sitting there. He saw Glenna sitting there now. For a while (it might have been seconds or minutes) he wrestled with the temptation to believe that the queerness of his nerves had got the better of him. It would have been so much simpler to accept that shape blotting out from his sight a part of the flowered chintz of the couch-cover as a continuance and strengthening of the hallucinations he had been playing with; pay for overindulgence exacted of a sudden of his eyes.

But Pizarro was too hard-headed about visible solids and audible sounds, and too straight with himself to let his wits be tampered with.

He had heard two doors opened and closed. He had heard the fall of feet behind him. He saw Glenna sitting there now.

He saw more than that. He observed that her pupils, fixed on him in the uncertain glow, were dilated, as though with a doubt as startled and deep as his own, that her face was bloodless, and that on her knees she held a small morocco traveling-bag.

She spoke first.

"How are you here?" And immediately, her voice

still on the same note of soliloquy: "Where is the boat?"

"Where is the boat? Why, just down in the river."

"When did you come here?"

"A little while ago. This evening, of course, you understand."

"Why?"

"Why did I come? Here?" . . . He got up and walked out into the darker part of the room. He shifted about, scrutinizing the sheeted shadows thrown over everything that intervened. The reason for wandering about in this silly way was beyond him. Presently, returning to his chair, he said:

"Why are you here?"

"I wanted to come."

"Have you been before?"

"No."

"This is very strange."

Presently Pizarro asked: "Were you surprised to see me here?"

"They told me, down below. Mrs. Webb told me."

They couldn't get away from that singular intona-

tion of soliloquy. It was like rehearsing speeches in private which they might have made, each to the other.

Now there was another period of silence. Pizarro rested his elbows on his knees and for a moment stared into the red among the logs. But it wouldn't do. His eyes came back to Glenna. She was still looking straight at him, holding the bag with rigid care between her fingers and her knees, as though it were eggs.

"How have you been, Glenn?"

"I've been well."

"And King?"

"My father has been well." With a plain effort at concentration Glenna picked it up again before the subject had fallen quite out of reach. "You haven't been well, John. You're thin."

"Am I?"

Glenna put the bag out of her lap, and a little blood returned to the skin over her cheek-bones. Her pupils, contracting, seemed for the first time to come to a focus.

"You look like the wrath of God!" she cried.

"I feel all right."

"You haven't been treating yourself decently. Whatever it is, it's been too hard for you. John, where have you been?"

"I've been in New York."

"All this while?"

He nodded.

"I saw you in a theater last week."

He continued to nod, a bemused automaton.

"You've been ill, John. Is that why you've stayed in the city, instead of going on your cruise?"

And still he kept on with his nods, engrossed in watching every quickening change in the face before him, until with a tardy grasp of the question she had put he said: "No, that's not why." Then, immediately, seeing all the implications of that and desperate to mend the gap in his fiction: "It seemed better to shove off in the spring, Glenn, rather than in the fall. So to-day, you see, I've started out. I stopped here, simply, on my way out of the Sound. Queer, how it's happened, isn't it?" His eyes were astray and his brow lined with horizontal ridges. "But you say you've been well? And King too? . . . I shall be all hunkey, by the way, once I get to sea. . . ."

They were dumb again. That went on for a minute or so. Glenna brooded at the hearth between her toes.

"When shall I be all hunkey, John?"

No answer.

Pizarro's head felt as though it had a wire wrapped around and around it, pinching off the thinking part of his brain from the doing part. But finally he did get up. He walked around to the back of his chair, meanwhile buttoning his coat. Glenna wasn't watching him. She looked tired. He heard her asking, and again it was in that tone of soliloquy: "When shall *I* be getting to sea?"

He retrieved his cap from the smoking-stand, and straightway let it drop again. "But, Lord alive!" he protested in a loud tone. "I can't leave you *here!* You can't stay here, Glenn, alone like this, now! This is no place for you!"

"I know. That's it, John. There doesn't seem to be any place for me."

His brain was talking emphatically inside his cranium: "Hell take it, fellow, go! Don't stop to quibble; *get out!*"

An embarrassment, moral and physical and deeper

than any he had ever known, laid hold of Pizarro. He couldn't go; he couldn't stay. He took two fresh candles from the box on the floor by his chair, and guided in his helplessness by the habit of recent hours he walked out through the dining-room and into the hall giving to the master's wing. That he was thoroughly adrift was betrayed by the fact that, having candles to illuminate his path through the intricacies of his course, he had accomplished a good two-thirds of the way before it occurred to him to light the things. Then, having lighted them, he would have returned like a rational fellow to the living-room. But it was too late. Glenna had come to follow him in his meaningless peregrinations.

"It's dismal, isn't it?" he heard her musing somewhere behind his shoulder. "Kind of sad, and kind of horrid."

"Any house would be so, empty this length of time."

"I don't know the place."

He turned on her, holding the candles up on either side of his head where their close light fell on his cheeks, suddenly dark red.

"What do you mean—you don't know the place?" It was like the rebellion of impatience, bitterness, and shackled futility. "Well, then, why in God's name do you want to talk like that? You know every inch of it! You remember as truly and vividly as I do the look of it, here, there, everywhere; you remember the shapes and colors of everything, the very air of it; you *do,* Glenn! You remember every single one of the thousands of times you've gone along this hall, your hand around my thumb, out to dinner, the thousands of times I've carried you home to your bed, between these same walls. You remember, for instance, and you can never forget it, the evening you stood in that doorway just there and undertook to tell me a lie about Daisy and your lessons—the first lie you ever tried, and I guess the last—and how you couldn't pull it off—and how you beat my legs with your fists when you found how bad at it you were. And you remember, Glenn—"

"That is all so long ago. It was some one else, I guess. . . . No, I don't remember, John."

"It wasn't some one else. It was you; it was I. I can't accept—"

"No, I don't remember, John. And I wouldn't know this place."

There was something in her stance, in the set of the head on the fair strong column of her neck and in the obdurate straightness of her gaze, a quality adamantine, ruthless, possessed, like the gesture of some hidden *coup d'état* of youth seizing the power, that drove Pizarro, literally as well as figuratively, a step back. A blow on the chin will do one of two things to a man; it may addle, or it may clear, his head.

"Glenn," he said, slow and painful about his words, "tell me good-by, and then go."

"Where?"

He found he was cold all over. This came not so much from the chill of the house as from a sense he had in him of his forces of resistance being stolen away.

"Go back!" It was sharp this time.

"Is that an order, John?"

"Yes!"

"Who are you, to give an order to me? . . . And besides, to-night I'm my own woman. To-night—

do you remember, John?—I'm of age. You're the second person I've had to remind of it this evening. The other was my father."

"King?"

"My father. . . . I wanted him to explain to me something it was clear he felt delicate about explaining to a young and innocent girl. That's to say, John, why it was, really, you turned me off and went away."

Pizarro opened his mouth; then closed it before the question had had time to get out.

Glenna answered it, all the same. "Yes, he did. If what he told me wasn't the truth, now's your time to put me right about it, John."

Pizarro turned and went on along the hall. He was in a blind alley; the chamber at the end caught him in a cage. This was the girl's own room, the nursery of babyhood, the boudoir of adolescence, and Pizarro suffered the most curious delusion that the youngster was there, a phantasmal presence among the bales of bedding and the sheeted skeletons of the furniture, even at the moment Glenna adult and living came through the door behind his

back. He felt himself trapped between them, and a queerer feeling he had never known since he was born.

"Glenn," he said, without turning, "what's wrong with us?"

"Nothing's wrong with me, John."

"With me, then."

"I know that. And I know what's wrong with Ki—with my father."

"Well?"

"I was going to say cowardice, but it's not cowardice. You're both of you brave enough—as the run of bravery goes. It's ignorance, John. Plain, tragic ignorance. Neither of you appears to know that the only way to kill a shadow on the wall is to move the light somewhere else. No, you, you and he, you've got to live up to your own ideas of chivalry and self-sacrifice and ghosts of subconscious scandal by killing the shadow with your fists. And, poor fellow, nobody was ever able to do that. The shadow is nothing. Nothing is hurt but the wall and the fists

"Yet in a way," she added, "you *are* cowards. You're afraid to rebel against the rule of the habit

of your own brains. You're afraid to command them to see facts and forget mistakes."

He had to turn and face her now, because it began to be too fantastic that he should be asked to believe it was Glenna's voice carrying on there behind him, period by pitiless level period of logic, all its mutinous passion concentrate in the task it had set itself of dispassionate lucidity, and because he felt himself, more and more swiftly, being dominated.

He looked at her. Lifting the candles high he looked at her again.

"I'm not afraid of shadows, John. I'm not afraid of ghosts, inside or out. I'm not afraid of my own brain."

But what he had discerned was that this amazing prodigality of reason and self-faith wasn't prodigality at all, but something eked out with ever more difficulty and more exhaustion and pain, a brave demonstration-in-force that carried in itself its own despair. The girl, for all her attitude of challenge, was shaking from head to feet; there was a queer pawky look about her eyes and a blue look about her lips. She was worse than haggard; for a moment in her life she was cruelly, slatternly plain.

Perhaps she knew it. Or perhaps it was something else. But she cried at Pizarro in a voice breaking of a sudden high in her mouth: "Don't look at me! Don't stand there staring at me like that!"

Nothing she could have done would so have made him stand and stare, all his elaborate house of resolution in its last collapse.

"Don't, John!"

But then she came to him, and wresting the candles from his hands before he knew what she was about she threw them away, leaving darkness to hide her; or nearly darkness; for one candle, fallen some feet off without quite going out, recovered presently a guttering pulse of flame.

They stood as they were, holding each other's forearms in this wraith of light, neither able to move.

Pizarro swallowed. His tongue dried. Finally he managed to say: "Glenn—for pity of us all—if you love me—"

She grabbed and distorted his meaningless imploration.

"If I love you! Why should I love you?"

Her tone had changed still again. The system must throw off its poison, and if it does it quickly, well.

"If *I* love *you!* What love do you think I owe *you?*"

She seemed to tap a forgotten reservoir of strength; she began to wrestle his arms with hers, but whether it was to free herself or to tighten her grasp on him she couldn't perhaps have said. This way, that way, up and down, with an aimless, disordered violence. Her repressed and rebellious thoughts poured out in difficult fragments, half incoherent. "—when you've hurt me—broken me in pieces—left me bewildered—tormented—ashamed—broken me—hurt me hideously—with your blind—your blind, bad, brutal—" It became nothing but hard breathing.

The darkness had given her up again. The illumination that was in the room grew by irregular flares. They were both conscious that the roll of bedding on which the lighted candle had fallen had taken fire, but neither of them seemed able to attach much importance to the fact.

With Pizarro it was because just now an odd conviction had entered and commandeered his mind. Between one instant and another, without apparent cause, he saw all this fevered chaos of word and act as full of meaning, dramatically purposed; he saw

events of a sudden marching in sequence, in inevitable crescendo, driving Glenn and himself along before them, whether they willed or no. As occultly devious and as melodramatically bald as one of those rites without which souls are not saved. And as though it too followed he heard himself crying in a wild-hearted rage: "Why shouldn't I hate you? What have you done—first and last—but wrecked me—from the day you were conceived till now, what have you done but knocked my life from under me, piece by piece? Hate you? Why not?"

He fell to coughing, and he was conscious with a profound relief that that job was done. He saw red in truth. Another swirl of smoke, sharp with the stench of burning wool, got down his windpipe.

They stopped wrestling and walked out into the hall and along it toward the dining-room, their shadows preceding them, enormous in the new thick hot light, and a ceiling of smoke crawling along just above their heads.

Once in the living-room they seemed to have escaped all that. They stopped breathing so hard, rubbed their eyes, smoothed out their foreheads,

and sat down to talk. Pizarro put a fresh stick on the failing coals in the chimney.

"Yes," he said, "I love you. That's the whole of it. That's everything there is."

"If you love me, why don't you do as men do who love women?"

"I've been afraid to think of it."

"On account of the shadows?"

"You say I'm afraid to rebel against the rule of the habits of my own brain. And I say there's a part of a man's brain that he can't rebel against, because it's a part he can't get at."

"That's the part you're afraid of, John?"

"That's the part I've been afraid of for us both, *in* us both. *The part we can't hope, ever, ever, ever, to get at.*"

There was a pause. Across the open door to the dining-room, black at the other end, two sparks blew.

"Why is it, John, I'm so much braver than you?"

"Perhaps it's because you don't know as much as I do."

"I'd rather be brave than wise. No matter what I've said to the contrary."

"And so, Glenn, would I."

"The only question is—brave about what?"

"Would it be brave, for instance, just to stay on right here?"

"You know the answer to that as well as I do, John Pizarro.

"Besides," she added, "I don't want to solve anything in that silly asinine way, John. I don't want to be burned for a martyr. If there's one thing I want to do, it's to come to life. I've been not-alive for so many centuries. To live and love and have children and adventures and die full of memories and regrets, a wild, wild old woman. I do-o-o, John! And, John, I *will!*"

The air began to pinch the nostrils. The door to the dining-room had grown visible in the past five seconds, a dull rectangle of murk.

"This is an extraordinary business," Pizarro mused, "when you stop to think of it."

"You mean, our sitting here calmly while the house burns down?"

He turned and studied her eyes with the intensity of a fellow suddenly gambling high. It was curious; in the two or three minutes past he had recovered, at

a rush, something that had been lost for years, a carelessness about sanctions, punishments, and rewards, a heady disdain for odds, a whole breath, a full stride.

"Is it simply, Glenn, a—a house—burning down?"

She studied him in return. A path-finding snake of smoke, drawn out of the ceiling shadows by the influence of the chimney-fire, dipped down in a smooth curvet between them and put its nose up the flue. Her face was blurred a little, but he saw her smile.

"I see what you mean, John. Oh, man! There's the difference between you and me, isn't it? You need a symbol, and I don't."

They were both on their feet, abruptly. The smoke snake was swollen; it choked them a little and stung their lids, but they paid no attention; immeasurably startled by the onrush of the other fire in the habitation of their memories they stood there staring through the veil that separated them, into each other's eyes.

"Is it just the house, Glenn?"

"No, John, it's life, it's history, it's everything. *She's* gone. She's in there, burned to ashes forever.

And so is *he*. I know that, dear. I know! I know!"

Heat smote them.

In the moment when she saw him striding toward her, actually, something she had not counted on in her heart pushed her back a step. But immediately she had recovered it, crying: "Yes, yes, yes! Try it! There's no other way of knowing—what happens—and who's who." She lifted her arms away from her body. "Give you luck!"

But her face, in that instant of waiting for his arms, was as white as his, and her pupils as black as his with the involuntary dilation of life-or-death. For after all, putting it to the touch, neither of them *knew*.

He did it roughly, warding off self-consciousness unconsciously that way. She parted her lips a little as he laid her head back; that kind of kiss it had to be, or none.

After a moment her lips stirred on his. "Yes, dear, yes, yes, yes!"

He wouldn't and he couldn't let her go. He lifted his head, but he held her tighter to him in his arms. He didn't know it, but with the depletion of air in

the room he was really strangling; the words of wonder were thick in his throat: "Why—why—of course! Why—why, Glenn! My—my Love!"

"It's all right, John?"

"It's all right! Nothing was ever so right! Give me your mouth—your cheeks again—your eyes—your poor dear weepy eyes!"

He was crazy, but he couldn't even yet let her go. He swung her up in his arms, close to his breast. He stood there wobbling like a tipsy man. "I love you! I love your soul, I love your body, passionately, and now the—world's burned—down—I'll shout it—*I always have!*"

"My love," she was gasping in his ear, fighting him, as in his queer new drunken-hearted freedom, he would have kissed her face again, "my love, if we're going, let us go now and hurry: I don't want us to die."

Still carrying her he ran. He ran through a house that was strange to the transmigrated new-born beings he and Glenna were, toward a front door he had never seen. But the feet that bore him were renegades; they remembered every turning on the way.

XVII

As they walked down the hill when they had got a little of the sweet air of out-of-doors into their lungs the house behind them looked like a home of festival, all the windows in one whole end of it red and gay.

They didn't lag, but they didn't hurry.

"John!"

"Glenn!"

"John Pizarro!"

"Glenna King!"

"Yes, there's that, isn't there. I suppose I'll have to go on being Glenna King, won't I, now?"

"Oh, Glenn, that's *it!* That's one of the things I've been— *Damn!* I don't know, dear, I don't know. It's on the knees of—"

"Of people, John. Of just people. And they can keep it there. And you can keep—tight hold of my hand. That's all."

As they got through the gate at the caretaker's house the treetops overhead caught a light. It was

as if they had burst suddenly into a rich red bloom against the black sky.

Webb, the watchman, opened the door to Pizarro's knocking finally, his nightshirt tucked into his trousers.

"Mr. Pizarro? Yes, sir? And— Oh, excuse me —Miss Glenna! Going to have some rain, are we?" But then, realizing what an odd color of darkness they all stood in, he put his chin in the air and came as near as the human throat can come to bleating. "Good God Awminety! *Fire!*"

"Yes," said Pizarro. "That's what I stopped in to tell—"

"Telephone!"

"Wait! Wait, man! Yes, you might phone. Might be best to get the apparatus out, to make sure the woods don't catch, at any rate. But as for the house—what I was going to say was, I set the house on fire, myself, deliberately. There'll be no adjustments; the insurance has lapsed; no one's out. . . . You may say that to the proper people—as from me. . . . I'm going now. Good-by."

Webb didn't wait to do his part of the amenities. Before they were out of the gate they heard him

within-walls shouting "Hello! Hello!" and clattering the instrument. And in what seemed an unbelievably short time (they couldn't have gone much more than thirty paces along the road) they heard the siren of the "chemical" on its way among the inhabited hills to the north.

It was after three in the morning; very shortly the day would be getting its grays together in the east, toward dawn. Just now, however, the sky was at its blackest. A summer rain-cloud had come in the past half-hour to hide the stars and a few drops fell, thudding on the dust. Earth and water and fire. The red plume of fire standing above the roof on the hill and casting the lovers' shadows far down along the road ahead seemed a fit part of the night, a light of no known world, enormous.

Even at this hour the contagion of alarm had spread. Pencils of headlights fell across woods in the distance and car-horns piped in the intervals of the loudening siren.

Glenna and Pizarro continued to walk along the clam-shell road at their own gait, hand in hand. Neither the hurly-burly charging at them from ahead nor the ruin licking at the cloud behind—nothing indeed that happened in that night outside—was as

strange and arresting as they were themselves. So it didn't matter much whether they hurried or lagged.

They tried their voices.

"Where's the path?"

"It's just there ahead."

"And the boat?"

"At the other end of the path. In the river, below the gasworks, waiting."

"Waiting for me?"

"Yes, waiting for you, and—"

"And for absolute China! Spice Islands!"

Glenna halted, putting a hand to her brow.

"My bag!"

"Bag?"

"It's back there, John. And all burned up."

"What of it?"

"My whole and my only—trousseau!"

They began to laugh. The tragedy of the bag, tiny and ridiculous in the fateful sublimity of the night, undid their nerves for a moment and let their spirits play.

"'Just as I am' with a vengeance then, poor fellow!"

"Poor fellow nothing! See here what I'll do. I'll

sell pink fish for sea-shells and with the sea-shells I'll buy you garlands."

"I'll be sweet in garlands!"

"You'll be beautiful in garlands. Everyday garlands and best garlands."

"You'll lie at my feet and adore me, John?"

"Till you want to scream!"

Another shower fell, whirling perpendicular drops that spattered cold on their heads.

"Come!"

"Run!"

But they didn't run. Twin headlights swung around a curve, stared at them, made a wind that blew them off the road, and passed on with brake-bands screeching. Screeching to a dead stop. Twenty yards away the ruby tail-light was stationary; a car door banged. They heard a name called back. "Glenn! Glenn!"

King came running, a blurred heavy shape, stumbling audibly among the ruts in the broken shells. The rain was thick that instant; it turned to a fusillade of diamonds as the thunder and lightning of the "chemical" plowed past, driving the groundlings deeper into the ditch.

King stood half-blinded by the ray that was gone, half-deafened by the siren's wail. The human voice sounded infinitesimal.

"Glenn! Where are you?"

Pizarro answered for her.

"Dead ahead, old man."

The light from the burning house began to dye the night again, and they saw him standing only a few yards away from them. He appeared to be stuck there. They had finally to go nearer to him. The fire-followers were coming now; the swinging beams of two more excited cars, passing across him, showed his face stamped with a pusillanimous confusion. An old man lost in the dark. A sort of deep chagrin. . . .

Glenna spoke to him. "Here I am, father, and here's John."

It made Pizarro break out in wonder. "You didn't see me, then. You didn't know it was I!"

King spoke at last in an obstructed voice. "Don't mind me: I shouldn't have run. I'll be all right in a second." He sounded really befuddled. "I—I just seem to be—I'm tired to death."

He put up both hands, knocking his hat off in his

awkwardness. But it didn't matter. Again the shower had passed. It didn't matter. He scratched his head. "I'm all in." Presently he pulled both hands down over his face, and opening his eyes at the shadowy pair before him he said: "So you're going to be fools!"

"Wasn't it inevitable, King?"

"Inevitable!" King made a disordered gesture of impatience. "Inevitable? Bosh! Are you grown up, or aren't you? That's rot. Weakness. Weak as water. Dish-water!"

The moment was due him, after the winter he had been through, so much must be said. He let go of everything. He had been betrayed; he had been ambushed and beaten. He surrendered himself to bitterness.

"Inevitable!" He couldn't let it go. "Anything's inevitable that you want and won't deny yourself! Haven't the guts to fight against. My boy! My girl! There's *nothing* you can't pin 'inevitable' onto, when all you want is your way . . . Glenn! John!"

It made the others feel ashamed. They weren't ashamed of themselves; they weren't ashamed of

him. They were ashamed of their own ears for listening to that voice of his, pitched high in the coal-red night of his world's disaster, cornered, dismayed, and suddenly senile. As though it were something no friend had the right to overhear.

King jerked one arm toward the hill, where the flame made a nimbus in the watery air.

"I see. I understand. But do you imagine you're as big as all that? Do you think you're gods? Do you think you can say 'So be it!' or 'So be it not!' . . . Children! Infants! . . . See, here comes all the rain in the sky!"

The rain was as thin as mist this time. As yet it was nothing to the burning house. From above descended the shouts of excited and outmatched men. All about, near and far, where the first faint pearling of the day began to spread, there were sounds of the comings and goings of morning, startled by conflagration and still nine-tenths asleep.

King made an effort. He straightened up.

"I'm the one to blame. First or last it was coming to me. That's what knocks me so utterly galley-west."

"Why?" It was the first time Glenna had spoken

since the very beginning. Her tone was strong, sure, and clear.

"Because you're going to hell."

"With my love."

"And nothing I can do—I see that now—" King shifted to Pizarro. "John, she's a child. You're not. Let me talk to you. John, come here!"

Pizarro was conscious of the import of his answer. All his life till now he had marched with King. He had been a man with King when Glenna had been a child.

"King," he said, his voice solemn in the bottom of his throat, "no other man has ever had a friend like you. God only knows what I'd have done without you." But he didn't move from Glenna's side. It was yes or no, and he had said no. The gulf had opened, and he had stayed on the side of youth.

King lowered his head and looked at the ground. "So that's that."

"I love your daughter, King, and she loves me. The *Chimera* is in the river just down at the bottom of the Point. We're going there."

When the older man spoke again his voice had got back where it belonged, gravely matter-of-fact.

UPB

"Of course it means good-by. If you're to be married, you'll have to do it somewhere out there. People are so constituted they could never—having known the Pizarros, father and child—never quite swallow that. . . . And if you're *not* to be married you can't stay here either. People are that way too. . . ."

Staring at the ground he discovered his dim hat, picked it up, and put it on.

"Father, I love you. Forgive me."

"King, old man! King, old friend!"

"You, Glenn, and you, John Pizarro, I've loved you. I've built on you. Now you're younger than I am; you're rasher and braver than I; perhaps you're righter than I. *I hope to God you are.* . . . Good luck! You'll want to be off now. Good-by!"

It was like that. Hand-wringings, caresses; what would they have been? It was a turning away, and as such it was better unadorned.

At the car King said to the driver: "Take me back to the station now."

The door stuck. Presently the driver got down, opened it for him, and helped him in. When he had climbed back to his own seat and got his engine

started the young fellow heard his fare rapping on the glass behind his head.

"Yes, sir? What?"

"Did I tell you? I want you to take me back to the station now. Thank you. Back, you understand."

The two that were left of the three stood in the ditch and watched the car go around, sweeping the trees and the hill with its paling lights, and roll away. Neither of them had known the word to say. Tears welled from their lids and ran unbothered down their faces.

At last Pizarro said: "We are righter than he."

"But not so brave."

"Glenn, do you know, I think we're as brave."

There was some sort of hullabaloo on the hill. Several unseen men were running. There was the clangor of a bell. A big fellow became visible at the Gibbs' gate. He waved an arm at the two in the road.

They turned and walked the other way.

"He's after us, John!"

"I don't know. Here, give me your hand."

"Here's the path."

"Don't look back. Get in front of me and look ahead." In a partial way they both realized what had happened. The word had been pronounced that made them fugitives. Their flight had begun.

At the top of the next hill, where the footpath left the open and went down among the trees toward the swampland along the river, Pizarro halted and let Glenna go on for a moment unawares. He turned and looked back at the house which he would not see again.

On the upper side of the clouds it would be almost full day; beneath them here the gray fag-end of night still lingered, distorting all things with its wandering dervishes of rain. Whether it had been the rain, King's prophetic "all the rain in the sky," or the fire-fighters, not so outmatched as they had seemed, the loom of the house stood stubbornly untouched, the steep gable-ends of native rock carrying up as always the rock of the hill. If roofs were gone the eye from here was no wiser. A remnant of smoke, thin and dirty-looking, drained up a little way to mingle with the color of the clouds, but again the angle of vision conspired with the turbid light to play queer tricks; the smoke might have been from

the wide kitchen chimney; beneath it a reincarnated Mrs. Jensen might have stirred the oatmeal and turned the morning toast.

"So the adventure begins," he said to himself aloud.

Glenna was calling: "John, where are you?"

"Coming, Glenn."

As he turned and went on down into the shadow of trees, moved by a mechanical impulse deeper-lying than thought he tightened his belt by another hole. He was, perhaps, the bravest of the three.

Glenna was waiting. She came back a little way to meet him, took the lapels of his jersey jacket in her hands, and stood breast to breast with him, studying his eyes.

"What is it, lover? You look white."

"It takes me that way. White."

"Yesterday morning, just yesterday, John, you were going away forever, all alone. That was wrong. It was a kind of a sin, wasn't it?"

"The deepest sin I could have committed."

It was amazing how sure and clear he felt himself once again within the circle of her passionate serenity and her unquestioning faith.

"I was wondering," he said, "if you will always be happy."

"Why? Aren't we too young to want to be that?"

It astounded him. It was so astoundingly simple. It was as though a hundred thousand complex unanswerable questions had been answered by a syllable uttered by a child.

They walked on down the path under the penthouse of the brightening trees. It was like another hidden forest. They were no longer they.

A wind, coming in from the southeast, cleaned out all the atmospheric muck from under the cloud, but the cloud itself persisted, a high ceiling over the water, making an iron-colored day.

When the yawl had passed the last of the spar-buoys marking the estuary's channel, Pizarro said to Blackstone: "We'll go to the eastward, to clear Montauk."

"Right; to the eastward, sir. . . . We have the wind and the tide both foul that way, sir."

"Never mind. . . . By the way, I'll take her."

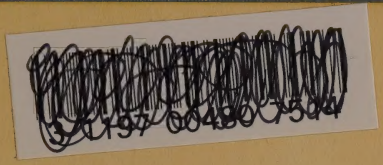
He took the wheel. Glenna, wrapped in the spare oil-skins, stood beside him. From time to time as

the boat, closehauled and carrying whole sail, bore hard on the helm under a heavier weight of the increasing wind, she put her hand beside Pizarro's on the wheel to take the buck of it: bitter scud blew in their faces.

"I love it, Glenn."

"Man, so do I. Fighting it."

So with everything against them they passed out, on their way to heaven and hell. . . .

THE END

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